



Of Woman born

**Reproductive
rights –
and
wrongs**

◆ **Forced
sterilizations
in Peru**

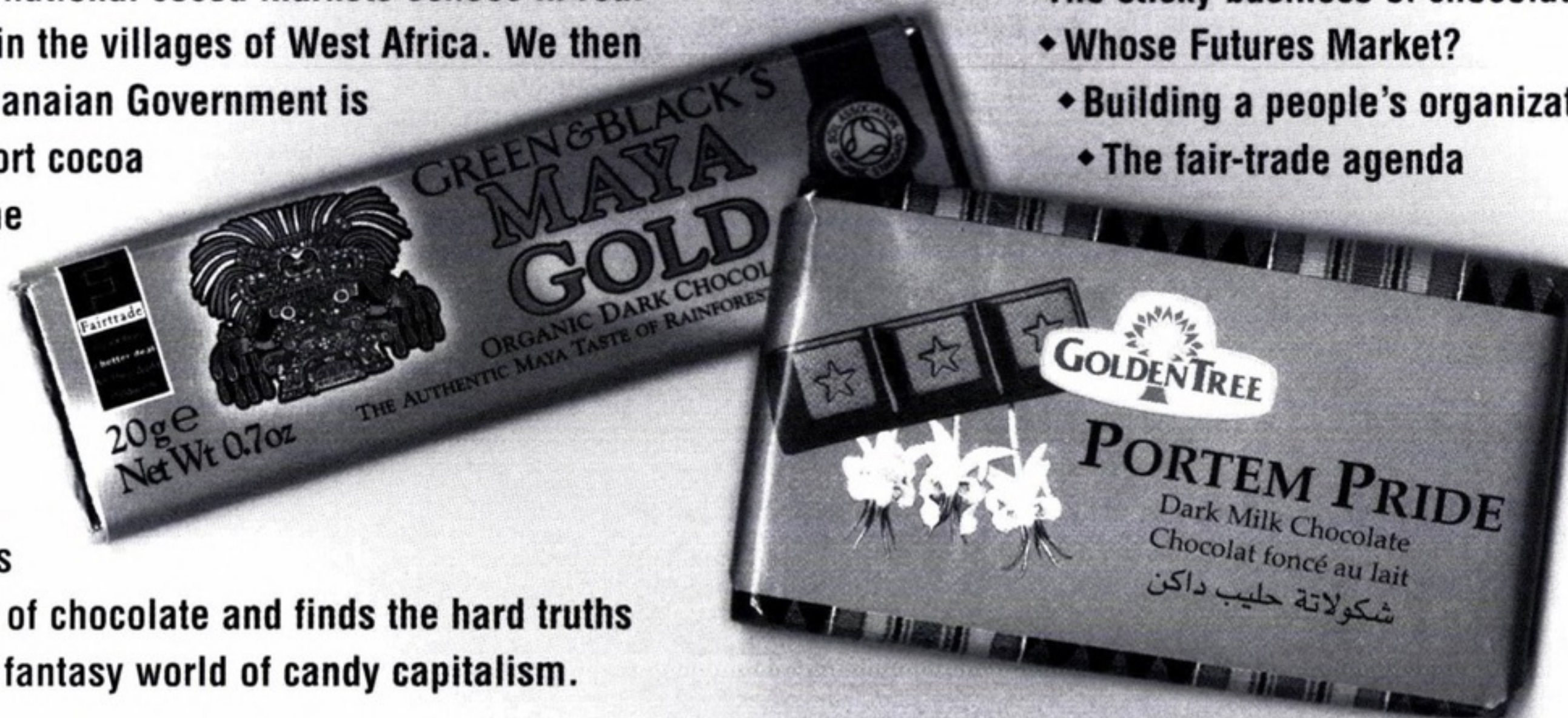
◆ **Young
people
and sex**

◆ **Infertility
in Africa**

◆ **Abortion:
the big
debate**

The Cocoa Chain

The NI goes to Ghana to visit a country where cocoa is still king. We visit Asamoah, a cocoa farmer, in his fields and find out how the bean is grown and shapes the culture of rural Ghana. The boom and bust in the international cocoa markets echoes in real economic hardship in the villages of West Africa. We then explore what the Ghanaian Government is trying to do to support cocoa farmers who earn the foreign exchange on which the country depends. We then follow the bean to Britain, where Asamoah visits the wondrous world of chocolate and finds the hard truths that lurk behind the fantasy world of candy capitalism.



- ♦ Harvesting the bean
- ♦ The Structural Adjustment Squeeze
- ♦ Life in a Cocoa Village
- ♦ The sticky business of chocolate
- ♦ Whose Futures Market?
- ♦ Building a people's organization
- ♦ The fair-trade agenda

COMING SOON: MIGRATION ♦ MONEY ♦ RED AND GREEN

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The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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Editorial (North America): Wayne Ellwood, Richard Swift.

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THIS MONTH'S THEME

Reproductive rights

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

WORKING on this magazine has not been easy for Andy, one of our designers. He and his partner Karen are expecting their first baby, but his desk has been littered with condoms and his colleagues have been teasing him mercilessly. He was using them in a variety of ways – as you will see if you flick through the magazine – but obviously not for what they were intended. In addition, because Karen is a doctor she had been kindly supplying us with leaflets and details about the whole range of contraceptives.

'It seems a strange coincidence that I'm doing this particular magazine at just this point,' he said wryly.

Andy's baby will be the twenty-third child of the current NI co-op. So children can tend to dominate conversation in the office sometimes. But having your own children does not give you the

prerogative on opinions or emotions. We are all children, even if we are not all parents, and most of us have strong feelings about reproduction.

The issue that stirs up the deepest passions and divides people most forcefully is abortion. In the US, anti-abortionists feel so strongly that they are prepared to kill physicians in order to prevent abortions. In Canada, several older doctors who administer abortions have been shot by snipers in an effort to intimidate younger ones from taking up the practice. On the other side, the pro-choice lobby believes just as deeply in 'a woman's right to choose'.

Even the word 'choice' is a loaded one, adopted by those in favour of abortion and spurned by those against.

This was not going to be an easy subject to cover. I decided that the best way in was through my own experience of pregnancy. Although this is obviously not something everyone will share, I hope it will ring bells for many people and raise issues for others.

By the time this magazine comes out Andy and Karen's baby will be almost due. They will enter the exhausting, muddled (but often joyous) world of parenthood. But at least Andy won't have to listen to any more jokes about condoms.



Nikki van der Gaag
for the *New Internationalist* Co-operative

FRONT COVER: 'A GOOD SPIRIT ALWAYS LOOKS AFTER HER YOUNG' FROM ASAFO! AFRICAN FLAGS OF THE FANTE, BY PETER ADLER AND NICHOLAS BARNARD.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY ANDREW KOKOTKA.

Letters

Cuban spirit

I was surprised not to have come across any reference to the 14th World Festival of Youth and Students in your issue on *Cuba* (NI 301). Held in Cuba last summer, there were 12,335 delegates from 132 countries



who were there to show their concern for anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship. This event was as important as the Pope's visit, drawing 200 journalists and 27 television networks to highlight the problems the Cuban people have to face in their fight for independence and self-determination.

I would also have liked more details of the Cuban spirit of internationalism. Since the Cuban revolution tens of thousands of Cuban doctors, nurses, teachers and soldiers have participated in various projects of international solidarity, despite the political and economic constraints that American imperialism imposes on the country. And you could have focused on the terrorist acts against Cuba (such as the use of biological warfare to introduce blights which destroy crops), for which Cuba holds the US Government responsible.

Sónia Duarte
San João de Madeira, Portugal

Violence gene

I found myself broadly in agreement with Professor Stephen Rose (*The genetics of blame* NI 300) on the limits of genetic determinism as an explanation for behavioural and social problems. I was, however, puzzled by his assertions regarding the



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

implications of a link being found between male violence and the 'Y' chromosome: viz that the only solution would be to abort all male foetuses.

It is surely possible that some men might carry a putative 'violence' gene (or genes) on the 'Y' chromosome whilst others do not. Also, if the genes were located on the pairing region of the father's 'Y' chromosome they would not necessarily be passed on to male offspring. Genetic screening could presumably detect it/them in a foetus.

Vivien Pomfrey
Launceston, England

Far from tolerable

Ian Lewis (NI 300) replied to my letter (NI 297) dismissing

my views on capitalism, as paradoxically 'left-wing colonialism'. The author suggests that I was preaching to developing nations on how to run their economies.

This is far from the truth. My assertion that the need for an alternative to capitalism 'is greater than ever' was directed at the worldwide capitalist system, including the so-called 'first' and 'second' world nations. It is now true to say that every nation has its own 'third' world. Britain, for example, has seen poverty almost double since 1979 thanks to the legacy of Thatcherism. The same is true in the US and New Zealand.

To see the effects of the free market we only have to read *Dancing in the Snow* (NI 296)

Cleaner energy

As you indicated in your article 'The light at the end of the tunnel' (*Mining* NI 299), unlike multinational corporations, locally-owned mining operations have a vested interest in protecting their resources. This includes the surrounding air, water and food supplies as they are the ones who will be directly affected by local environmental impact.

Leaving aside some of the local environmental impact of mining, you overlooked one major issue with regard to coalmining. The burning of fossil fuels for energy is the main contributor of human-made greenhouse gas emissions to our global atmosphere. The world's leading experts now agree that burning fossil fuels – coal, oil, gas – is slowly but surely upsetting our climate, releasing carbon dioxide which traps heat close to the earth – the so-called 'greenhouse effect'.

We must quickly wean ourselves from such fuels for energy and move towards cleaner, renewable energy technologies. The good news is that a move towards renewable energy creates four times the number of jobs and can bring employment to regions which are otherwise deprived of industrial development.

Jim Fulton
David Suzuki Foundation, Vancouver, Canada



which described the heroic fight of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers against 'casualization' and 'flexible working hours'. Their fight highlighted the pain and human suffering of many workers across the globe due to the doctrine of free trade, and capitalism in general.

When a system creates a situation where the richest 358 people have as much wealth and income as the poorest 2.3 billion it is far from tolerable.

John McSweeney
Manchester, England

Small mine

It was very interesting to note while reading *Mining* (NI 299) that even a small mine throws up nearly all the problems that a large mine does.

Gujarat is not very well endowed with minerals. However, it has quite a few in small quantities. In Bharuch district, lignite mining has been going on since 1985 and has created quite a few problems. The main one is water. Five villages around the mine have found that wells have run dry, local rivers and other water bodies have been diverted or silted up. The mining company has arranged for water supplied by tankers but it is not enough.

The artificial lake created by the open-cast mine contains acidic water (and probably other heavy metals) which is pumped out and passes through two villages before losing its acidity. The feet of cattle are burned when walking through it. In addition, the mine has caused greater gender inequality among the tribal people by refusing to employ women, who in any case have to stay home waiting for the water tankers all day.

Gujarat is poised for a big expansion of its mining activities. The state intends almost to treble its electric output in the next three years and much of this is going to be lignite-based. Lignite is known to be a dirty fuel, high in sulphur. There has been no public debate or consultation on the way this expansion will be implemented.

Michael
for the Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti
(Environmental Protection Committee)
Dediapada, Gujarat, India

Moving peace

Felicity Arbuthnot's article on Iraq (*Dying of Shame* NI 298) has had a tremendous impact on the Peace Movement in Vancouver. Until it was published, End the Arms Race (EAR), the umbrella organization for many peace groups in British Columbia had resisted working on the Iraqi sanctions issue. However, the President of EAR announced that the article had changed his thinking and EAR can now use its resources to inform and educate people about sanctions.

One of the pieces of information that we are trying to get out concerns the War Crimes Tribunal in New York City in 1992 where 22 judges from 18 nations found officials of the Bush administration guilty of 19 war crimes.

This ties in with the question asked by Felicity Arbuthnot: 'Who are the worst terrorists?' Saddam and his cronies have killed many people, but less than a million, as economic sanctions have. How can these sanctions continue when starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and collective punishment is prohibited by international law? Are these not crimes for which Clinton, Chrétien and Blair should also be tried. I think this issue needs to be a major priority for the International Criminal Court at the Hague.

Linda Morgan
Vancouver, Canada

Peacemakers

As a member of the Michigan Peace Team (MPT), I'm frequently asked, 'What do you do?' *Foreign Bodies* (NI 298) captures the role of the international peacemaker accompanying people in places of violent conflict. Readers on the net can check the link 'Global Peacemaking Opportunities' on <http://www.traverse.com/nonprof/peaceteam> for a regularly updated list of 18 volunteer services like Peace Brigades International and MPT.

Tom Shea
Traverse City, Michigan, US

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.



Letter
from
Mongolia

Going for Gobi

Louisa Waugh sets out for the desert with her enthusiastic mother.

MY mother rang her local travel agent in Cheshire, rural northern England, and told him she wanted a ticket to Mongolia. 'Timbuktu is that Madam?' he openly sniggered. 'I've got a right one here,' she could hear him saying aside to his colleagues.

My mother only knew one thing about Mongolia: the Gobi desert, which covers almost a third of the country. And this was where she wanted to go. When I explained there were only two ways of visiting the Gobi – booking an overpriced official tour and being led on a selected route, or flying to the Gobi alone and trying to organize the trip ourselves, she was undeterred. 'Where can we buy the flight? It'll be more fun going on our own and having an adventure. And you speak enough Mongolian.'

I was feeling stressed. Anyone who's lived here for more than a few months has chilling stories of being stranded in the steppe (or desert) with drunk, inept local guides and

warm we slept outside under ten million stars.

Over the next three days my mother learnt a few words of Mongolian, took countless photographs of Bactrian camels and thrived on her first-ever camping trip. We visited Mandelmaa's nomad friends and my mother drank *airag* (fermented horses milk) as I galloped round the lake with a rowdy crowd of young Mongolians, laughing out loud at the beauty of it all.

When we reluctantly abandoned the green waters and started back to Bayanhongor, we stopped to buy more *airag* for the searing hot drive. Here we met two drunk, charming old nomads and their sister, living alone with their horses and goats. We sat in their cool, dim ger, and introduced ourselves. 'She speaks Mongolian' said one brother to the other, 'but her mother doesn't understand a word we say.' I asked the older man his name. He sat up straight, looked me in the eye and announced solemnly, 'Jack'.

He'd obviously seen a film or heard of someone with this name, because he had told us we were the first foreigners his family had ever met.

Children from the nearby settlement spilled into the ger and 'Jack' asked us to take photographs for the family album. Taking my mother's arm he led us back into the brilliant sunshine and we posed *en masse*: mares and foals, a teenager on horseback, children, babies and

adults, 'Jack', his brother and sister, Mandelmaa and Batbayar and my exhausted, delighted mother.

Six hours and two jeep breakdowns later we were back in Bayanhongor. 'I'll send you copies of the photos from England, Louisa, and you must get them to Jack,' instructed my dust-coated mother, hugging Mandelmaa and Matt goodbye.

I've held on to the half-dozen photos as long as possible, reluctant to send them, wanting to keep the colours and images of this chaotic, memorable trip. But Mongolians treasure photographs, especially pictures of their families and friends, and nomads have little money to buy a camera. So just a couple of days ago I finally sealed the envelope and sent it to Matt, who I know will forward it to Mandelmaa. Eventually, just like us, these slightly battered pictures will find their way to Jack and his family.

Louisa Waugh is a freelance writer who lives and works in Mongolia.



Russian jeeps that refuse to start until the driver is heavily bribed. But, unwilling to pay the tour price, we bought plane tickets for Bayanhongor in the north-western Gobi.

To my intense relief the one contact I had in town, Matt, a gentle American teacher, came to the rescue. We'd have a Russian jeep that afternoon and could drive (or rather bump) to Orog lake, a rarely visited oasis in the Gobi. The four-day trip would cost \$100 between us and our driver Batbayar and his mother Mandelmaa had lots of local friends we could visit. I started to relax.

After queuing for petrol for almost an hour we set off in the early evening. Mandelmaa and Batbayar spoke no English, but were friendly, eager travelling companions. My mother gazed out of the jeep window, entranced with the lush green pasture, which swiftly became arid, stony steppe, backed by red mountains and the brilliant, cloudless blue sky. We drove till dark and camped on a huge natural ledge next to a smooth sand dune. Our food was gritty, but the night so

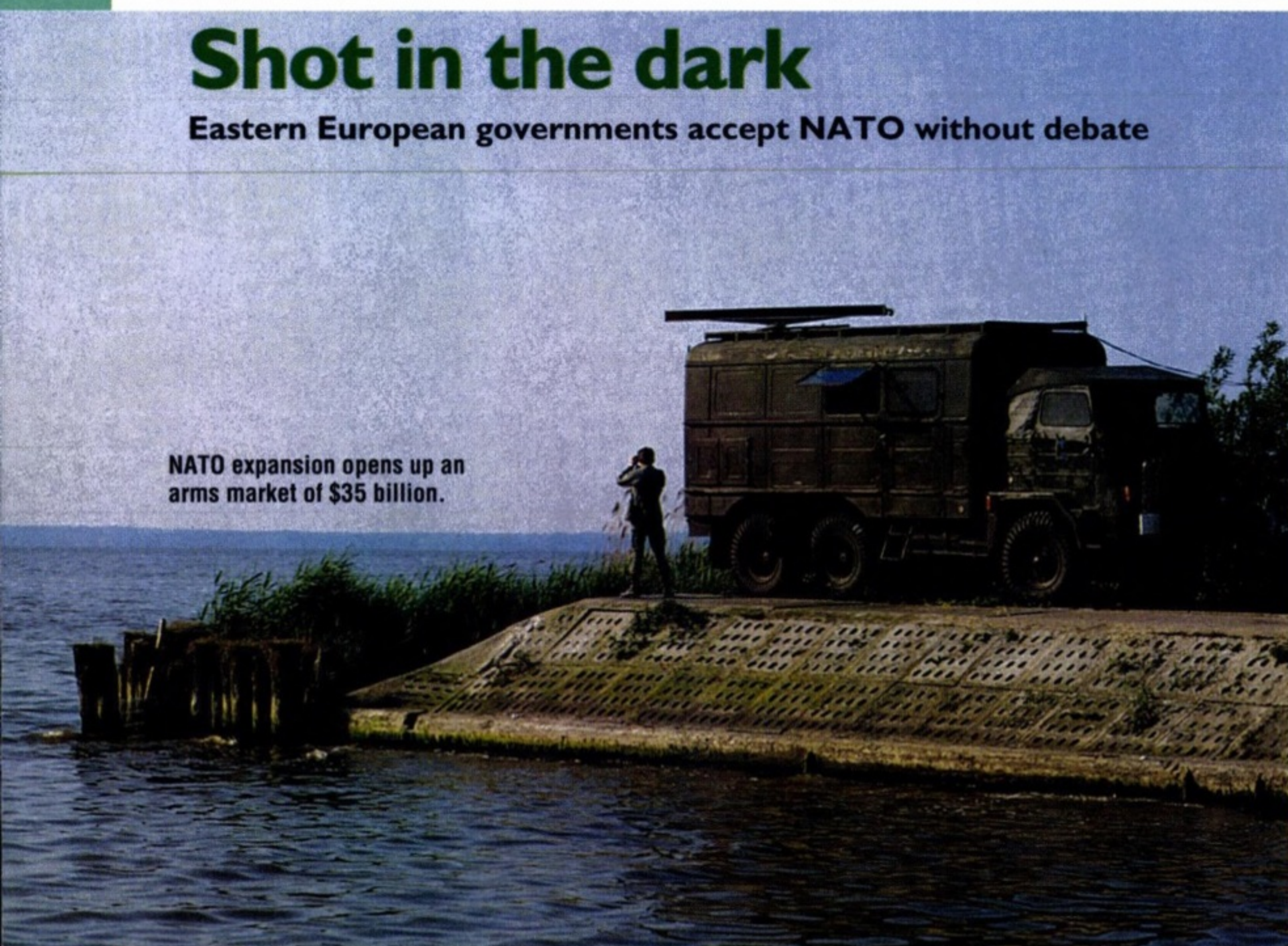
SARAH JOHN

ARMS TRADE

Shot in the dark

Eastern European governments accept NATO without debate

NATO expansion opens up an arms market of \$35 billion.



DAVID CONSTANTINE / PANOS PICTURES

PUBLIC discussion about possible membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is being stifled in Eastern European countries. The Hungarian, Czech and Polish Governments all want to join NATO. Accession protocols were signed in December by their foreign ministers without their citizens being aware of the total cost of joining the alliance or what NATO's strategic future will be.

Western companies say NATO expansion opens up a potential arms market worth at least \$35 billion. All three prospective East European members have committed themselves to increasing their military budgets. According to Jerry Kropiwnicki, the head of Warsaw's Centre for Strategic Studies, Poland will need to spend around \$2 billion by the year 2012 to insure that its armed forces are compatible with NATO's.

Pro-NATO bias in the Hungarian media was overwhelming – despite the fact that almost 600,000 citizens voted against joining. The Foreign Ministry's NATO communication strategy spent more than \$600,000 on television programs, articles and events in Hungary plus campaigns in mainstream US and European papers. In 1997 arms companies poured more than \$1 million into pro-NATO campaigns. Funds from these sources violated Hungary's media law, a fact which was noted on numerous occasions by the National Radio and Television Board (NRTB), an independent official body. But the Foreign and Defence Ministries dismissed the NRTB's decisions and continued to push for NATO membership. There is some hope in Eastern Europe that NATO membership will attract new investment. But there is no evidence that increased military spending influences economic prosperity in civilian sectors. Even US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said: 'There is no historical evidence that NATO provides economic benefits.'

The Nation Vol 266 No 9

Barred from Boy Scouts

The Supreme Court of California has ruled that the Boy Scouts of America are not a business but a club so the Scouts can legally exclude homosexuals, atheists and agnostics. The Scouts have already barred two Orange County boys who said they had 'not quite worked out yet whether they believed in God or not'. The Boy Scouts, who face lawsuits arising from their admissions policies in Chicago, Washington DC and New Jersey, hope the ruling may eventually apply across the US.

The Economist Vol 346 No 8061

Contract controversy

A coalition of 132 developing countries says the UN gives most of its lucrative contracts to rich countries. For every dollar Washington contributed to the UN Development Program, US companies got back more than two dollars in contracts. But the US is also the single biggest defaulter on its UN dues, owing more than \$1.3 billion.

Other chief contractors to the UN include Italy, Britain, France and Germany. Indonesian Ambassador Makarim Wibisono, chair of the 132-member Group of 77, says only 141 companies out of the 2,027 suppliers of goods and services to the United Nations were from Majority World countries. Many nations want the UN Secretariat to penalize countries that default by giving preference to countries who have paid their dues when deciding contracts.

Thalif Deen/Gemini News Service

Fatal flaw

A calf named Marguerite, the first mammal cloned from a foetal muscle cell, is dead. Her problems began shortly after her birth in February when the stump of her umbilical cord became infected. She was kept in an enclosure by herself and treated with antibiotics. But one night in March Marguerite tried to join cows in an adjoining pen. She succeeded but had jammed herself in the bars and suffered severe trauma to her spine and thigh muscles. The umbilical infection spread to the injured tissues and she died on 4 April. French scientists say her death may indicate that cloned animals have weakened immune systems.

New Scientist Vol 158 No 2130

Resolute support

The local council of an Australian town in New South Wales has become the first outside the US to boycott corporations which deal with Burma. The Marrickville Council unanimously backed a proposal to prohibit the purchase of goods and services from companies which do business in Burma. The Council is also encouraging other local authorities in New South Wales to pass similar resolutions.

Free Burma Coalition, Australia



PIERS BENATAR / PANOS PICTURES

ENVIRONMENT

Warning!

Time is running out for Asia's forests

INDIA is one of many Asian countries which has almost wiped out all its natural forest. Some 99 per cent of India's original forest has been lost while 57 per cent of the current forest is threatened by logging, says the US-based World Resources Institute. India's 'frontier forests' – large intact natural forests – are under greater threat than those in Burma, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Asia has lost almost 95 per cent of its frontier forests. From 1960 to 1980 this region had the highest rate of forest destruction in the world. Today isolated pockets of frontier forest remain in Burma, Laos and Cambodia where war and civil unrest have inhibited development. But commercial loggers, who have exhausted resources in Thailand and peninsular Malaysia, have recently moved into these areas.

Most of Asia's remaining frontier forest is confined to the Indonesian islands of Borneo, Sumatra, Sulawesi and West Papua. But more than half of these are under threat from logging by corporations or farmers.

Asia is the world's most densely populated region, with one



Marked for export – demand for paper will double by 2010.

person for every hectare of land, and demands for food and agricultural land are ever-increasing. In addition, worldwide demand for paper products continues to grow. In the last 30 years, per-capita consumption of paper has increased by over 86 per cent. Industrial countries use ten times as much paper per person as developing nations. And demand is expected to increase – global consumption of industrial wood products is predicted to rise by more than 50 per cent in the next 12 years.

The Institute challenges the idea that frontier forests are empty wilderness areas: 'People have lived in many forests for hundreds of generations, mostly in small groups. Forests today house several hundred million people in Asia alone.' The pressure for poor countries to develop these lands is overwhelming. Despite this, the Institute claims, remaining forest areas

are often not 'ripe for development' – the forest's soil is mostly ill-suited for agriculture and there is little commercially viable timber per hectare.

Frederick Noronha/Third World Network Features

MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES



HISTORY

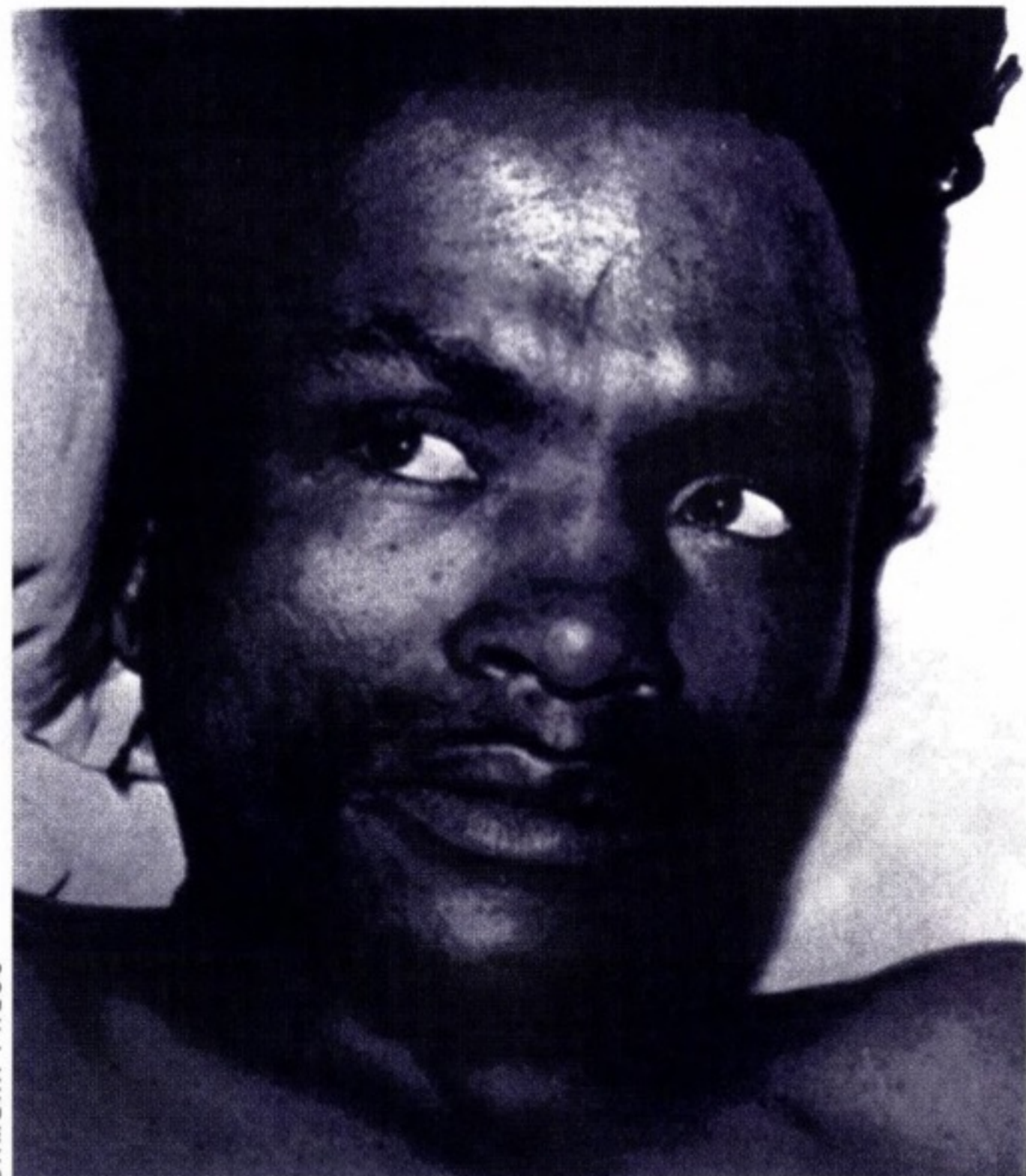
Burial rights and wrongs

Executed Kenyan freedom fighter remembered

PRESSURE is growing on Britain to identify the grave of an executed Kenyan who helped lead the country's independence struggle. Campaigners and family members want the body of 'Field Marshal' Kimathi to be exhumed and given a proper burial. Kimathi was a feared leader of the *Mau Mau* guerrillas who rebelled against British colonialism in the 1950s. He was captured in 1956 and executed in February 1957 – one of about 1,000 guerrillas to die in the struggle, in which 12,000 civilians also perished.

'All we know is that the freedom fighter is buried at an unknown spot just outside the walls of Kamiti prison,' says Njuguna Mutahi of the Kenya Human Rights Commission. 'At the moment we want to pressure British officials in a civilized manner, but if they don't act fast we're going to stage a demonstration in Nairobi. They were the jailers and they know where they buried him.'

Prisons commissioner Edward Lokopoiyot says: 'The colonial Government took away records about the Mau Mau and existing records at Kamiti shed little light on the burial site of hundreds of Mau Mau freedom fighters hanged and buried at the prison.' He acknowledges the Prisons Department has reached a dead end. 'Unless the British help in rebuilding the records of Kamiti at that time and tracing the actual sites and names, we have little to go on.' The Human Rights Commission and Release Political Prisoners lobby group have now petitioned British officials to reveal the site – their demands are



The elusive Kimathi: Kenyans demand British officials find his grave.

being passed onto the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

Historians in Nairobi believe that the late President Jomo Kenyatta's post-independence Government struck an agreement with Britain that records relating to Kimathi would not be released until 2013. Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o writes in his book *Detained*: 'It is interesting that throughout his life as Prime Minister and later President of an independent Kenya, Kenyatta never allowed the remains of Kimathi to be removed from Kamiti Prison to a symbolic shrine of honour.' Ngũgĩ was once detained for writing a play about Kimathi's role and now lives in exile. He says: 'The aim was to remove Mau Mau and other patriotic elements from the central stage of Kenyan politics.'

John Kamau/Gemini News Service

Ruddy ducks

More than 30 European and North African countries have urged Britain to kill 3,000 sexually-voracious ruddy ducks who threaten the 'genetic

purity' of continental ducks. The ruddy ducks migrate to southern Spain and mate with white-headed ducks creating fertile offspring resembling neither parent. In Spain the ruddy duck is considered an aggressive alien interloper and shot on sight. European and North African signatories to the Berne Convention on protecting endangered animals have agreed overwhelmingly to press Britain to start the cull 'without delay'.

Guardian Weekly Vol 158 No 9



CYRIL RUOSO / STILL PICTURES

Defamation and death threats

Eleven libel suits have been brought by senior Singapore Government members (including Prime Minister Goh Chok Tang) against Workers' Party candidate Tang Liang Hong. The plaintiffs accuse the opposition party leader of defaming Government's politicians. During a recent election campaign opponents called Tang 'anti-Christian' and a 'Chinese chauvinist'. When Tang filed a police report claiming these accusations were false, the libel suits were brought in response. Tang left Singapore after receiving death threats but was found liable in absentia for damages totalling \$5.65 million.

For more details contact: Amnesty International Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2 300 1250, Fax: +852 2 782 0583

Dry season ends

Indian officials in the northern state of Haryana have lifted a 21-month-long ban on liquor sales. Boozers had simply gone to New Delhi across the state line or bought illicit moonshine – often so toxic that it killed dozens of people. The state lost nearly \$3 million in liquor taxes and suffered a fall in property prices because drinkers preferred living in wet New Delhi. When the ban was repealed thousands swarmed to roadside stalls to buy liquor.

Time Vol 151 No 15

Straight to the point

A Boeing 747 with 400 passengers emits as much carbon dioxide as if each passenger had driven their own car to the same destination.

The leading suggestion to limit pollution caused by airplanes is simple – re-route flights to be more direct and at lower altitudes. Pilots often do not fly direct routes but prefer to spend as much time as possible flying over land. Modern radar makes this practice unnecessary. A study for the Dutch Government found that detours to avoid flying over military airfields and other strategic obstacles may increase air journey times in Europe by 30 per cent. Environmentalists say

that aircraft should not be flying routinely through the ozone layer, where emissions are adding to ozone depletion.

Green Futures No 9 1998

Quote

'A cat or a goat can become President for all I care, as long as he can ensure the small people don't have to run around looking for rice.'

Tarmuji, a fruit seller in Surabaya, Indonesia.



JEAN-LEO DUGAST / PANOS PICTURES

Of Woman born

Nikki van der Gaag

labours her way through the labyrinth of contraception, pregnancy, birth – and politics.

S EVEN months pregnant with my first child, I was standing in line at a pharmacy when an old woman sitting on a nearby chair called out to me.

'First baby, is it?' I barely had time to reply when she went off into a reverie:

'I remember my first... ooh I had a terrible time. Took three days, it did. Blood everywhere. And I was in such pain – they didn't have your fancy painkillers then.'

'When was this?'

'1938. It was 5.15 am on Tuesday 22nd March.' She remembered with unhesitating precision.

At this point she was called to collect her prescription. I breathed a sigh of relief.

'Well, good luck,' she called cheerily.

'Thanks.' By this time I felt I needed it.

In the months that followed it was extraordinary how many women told me their birth stories. Often, like the woman in the pharmacy, they were

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

KEYNOTE

alarming. Sometimes they were wonderful, the woman's face glowing with joy as she spoke. Mostly they were a mixture of both. I felt I had entered a special world, a world of women's deepest experiences and most precious secrets. I also felt bloody nervous.

About the same time that I was having these conversations I was beginning to notice how much people were staring – or trying hard not to stare – at my belly. It was as if I no longer existed. It was the child inside me that was now the focus of attention, not the woman who contained it. Complete strangers at parties (particularly but not exclusively men) felt at liberty not only to patronize me, but to pat my stomach as though it was in the common domain rather than a part of me. My body had suddenly become public property.

And I suppose it was. Being pregnant means not only preparing to become a mother, but entering a fraught and complex world, where people feel they can tell you what to do and everyone wants a piece of the pie – which in this case happens to be your body, or rather, your womb.

Adrienne Rich's memorable book, *Of Woman Born*, points out the many and contradictory ways in which society views a pregnant woman: 'as proof of her husband's sexual adequacy; as dangerous to crops or men; as especially vulnerable to the evil eye or other maleficent influences; as an embarrassment; as possessed of curative powers.'

Pregnancy is a symbol of the mystery of sex and creation, the harbinger of birth and perhaps even a way of cheating death. No

wonder it is seen as powerful. And there is an important dichotomy here. Being pregnant heralds a new person, but one who is brought into the world by another who already exists. They are one, and yet not one. Mother-and-baby, but also baby – and mother. It is often forgotten in these debates that it is generally the woman's responsibility not only to bear the baby but to raise the child it becomes.

But who is more important? Who gets precedence if there is a conflict of interests? And who decides? The mother? Those who say they speak on behalf of the baby? The medical establishment? The father? The mother-in-law or father-in-law?

Society exerts its own pressure on a woman, depending on her age, race, sexuality, class, where she lives and how much money and education she has. For many women reproduction happens in a context where they have no power to make even the most day-to-day decisions. 'No contraceptives,' says her husband, 'I want another son.' 'No abortion,' says the government or the Church or the Imam. 'This is what you must do,' says the doctor or the traditional healer in the village. Common practice, local beliefs and lack of power dictate how she is born, how she lives, and all too often how she must die.

Because for too many women, birth is the end rather than the beginning of life. One woman dies every minute from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. For each death at least 13 others suffer a less serious threat to their health – one which can leave them permanently disabled.

Most maternal deaths are in the Majority World. A woman in Africa is 500 times

more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than a woman in Scandinavia – although poor or minority women everywhere are the most at risk.¹ In the US, for example, black women face a risk nearly four times as high as white women.²

It is a tragedy that women die giving birth. And what is worse is that in large part it is an unnecessary tragedy. Women die because they lack proper medical care; or because they can't pay for it; sometimes they die because they don't have transport. They also die because they try to abort an unwanted baby themselves – illegal abortion accounts for an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of maternal mortality worldwide.

And they die because they are still children themselves, their bodies too young to give birth safely. One in four women in Asia and Africa is married before the age of 16.

But things are changing, albeit slowly. In some countries early marriage has declined since the previous generation.¹ Increasing numbers of people have access to contraception (though 350 million couples who want it still can't get it) and there is growing awareness of the harmful nature of female genital mutilation.

An active women's health movement has made sure that reproductive rights remain on the international agenda as well. 'After all these years,' said Sandra Kabir of the Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition at the UN Conference on Population and Development in 1994, 'the



Bonny baby: but will this young woman in Nepal be under pressure to have more children than she wants?

world is finally talking about reproductive health policies.³

In India, for example, the Supreme Court banned the use of the drug quinacrine for sterilization earlier this year after women worldwide campaigned against it. In Australia, feminists are demanding the decriminalization of abortion laws.⁴ In Afghanistan, women are refusing – often at considerable personal cost – to cede control over their bodies, their minds and their lives to the prevailing fundamentalist version of Islam.

In the West, we are bombarded daily with stories of new scientific developments: we're promised cloned babies; artificial placentas; the ability to conceive after menopause and many other 'advances'. The challenge here is to decide which technology will improve women's choice and control over reproduction, and which will take it away. Very often new scientific developments have wide-ranging moral and ethical implications. These need to be considered before new reproductive technologies are introduced, not after.

For example, much of the testing of new contraceptives is done on women in the Majority World, often in the name of population control. The alarmist calls sound from loud voices in the US and other Northern nations. But they are directed at the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America:

'It is not physically possible for population growth to continue for long at today's levels. The current size of human population and the additions made to it each year, are unprecedented in history,' says the US-based Population Reference Bureau.

There is no doubt that the world's population is increasing – at the rate of 80 million people a year. What is in question is a) how much of a problem this actually is and b) what to do about it. And here there are three main camps.

First, the conservative position, which is against abortion and contraception (apart from 'natural' methods). This is backed by the Catholic Church and some Muslim states, in alliance with right-wing groups.

Second, the population control people, who threaten Malthusian (see page 26) disaster if growth is not slowed.

And third, those who place the woman's needs at the centre of the debate. This includes the women's health movement, which believes in safe and affordable contraception, but also thinks that the alarmism over population is misplaced and overrated. It is the fact that the world is unequal that is a problem, they say, just as much as the numbers of people in it. For example, my own two children will consume twenty times as much as two children in Asia, Africa or Latin America – and cause ten times as much pollution.

They believe that women's health



Speaking out: this Colombian woman was originally pushed aside by the Muslim Brotherhood at the UN Conference on Population and Development, but women panellists insisted that she should be allowed to ask a question.

choices rather than population control should be the objective of birth control programmes. This means that quality must be the focus of family planning. How is the contraceptive being delivered? Does the woman have enough information about how to use it? About possible side-effects? What about medical personnel and sterile conditions? Is the woman herself happy with her choice; in control of what she wants to do? If so, then she is likely to want fewer children in any case.

Adverse experiences with contraception – lack of information, unpleasant side-effects – are a sure-fire way of putting women off birth control (as I remember well when a particular Pill gave me migraines). Giving women the security of a job, a roof over their heads, affordable and accessible healthcare and schools to send their children to is a better way of controlling population than any number of forced sterilizations (see page 16).

In China, there is some debate about how successful its infamous coercive population-control policies and its one-child policy have been. It is true that fertility rates have dropped from 3.3 children per woman in the 1970s to 1.7 in 1994. But China achieved substantial reductions in its birth rate through economic and social changes before the one-child family policy.⁵

Improvements in people's standards of living have gone further than coercion in persuading people to limit their family size. Poor people often want more children

at least partly as an insurance against old age. They know that some of their children are likely to die. If this risk is reduced through improvements in their livelihoods such insurance becomes redundant.

For many couples in China economic security is no longer just about having babies. As a government minister pointed out: 'In order to become rich more quickly and build up a society that is comfortably off, many couples would like to have fewer children and delayed child-bearing. They prefer 'gold babies' to chubby babies [ie

Giving women security is a better way of controlling population than any number of forced sterilizations

they prefer to get rich before having children].⁵

Unfortunately, for many millions of the world's poor the trend is in precisely the opposite direction. Their babies are neither golden nor chubby. Structural adjustment policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have led to cutbacks in healthcare, education and infrastructure in many countries, leaving people without even basic medical services. Ironically, spending on family planning is often more than the relatively small amounts spent on healthcare. This is partly because money for family planning often comes from outside donors while healthcare is an internal matter, and partly because birth control has

DONNA DECESARE / FORMAT

been given high international priority. For example, in Bangladesh and India spending on population control absorbs from a quarter to a third of the annual healthcare budget.^{5,6}

'Bangladesh has been so preoccupied with the pressing problem of its population explosion that the general health situation has not received enough attention,' says the World Bank. In Indonesia almost twice as many family planning clinics as primary healthcare centres have been built.⁷ In the meantime, big business makes big bucks out of birth control – multinational drug companies rack up contraceptive sales between \$2.6 billion and \$2.9 billion a year.⁸

Many of these concerns were debated at the UN Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994. In addition there was a vocal right-wing backlash led by fundamentalists from a range of cultures and religions, which called for the abolition of legal abortion and the suppression of contraception.

It was a measure of the effectiveness of the women's health movement that the Conference moved as far as it did towards recognizing the link between reproductive health and the wider context of women's empowerment. There was also a clear understanding that unsafe abortion is a public health problem; that men too must be responsible for family planning and that gender discrimination, violence against women and female genital mutilation must stop.

For these statements to become reality will take not only serious cash but a serious commitment on the part of everyone, from governments to the grassroots. If it happened it would herald the birth of a revolution in women's lives. But as yet there isn't much evidence that things have changed substantially since the Conference.

If all women are to have the choices that I did then we are talking about a sea-change. The goal is a world where women have control over their own lives and their own bodies; where they have education, employment and access to good health services; a world where a woman has the ability to choose to have the number of children she wants; not to have unsafe sex; not to be genitally mutilated or married at a very young age; not to be beaten or raped.

That would be real revolution. Let's make it happen. ■

1 *The State of World Population 1997* (UNFPA) 2 World Health Organization magazine (Jan/Feb 1998) 3 Quoted in *People and the Planet*, Vol 3, No 4. Article by Bishakha Datta. 4 Jo Wainer and Nancy Peck, 'By Women for Women: Australia's National Women's Health Policy', in *Reproductive Health Matters*, No 6, Nov 1995. 5 Betsy Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs* (South End Press 1995) 6 Imrana Qadeer, 'Primary Health Care: A Paradise Lost', (*Indian Association of Social Science Institution Quarterly*, No 14) 7 A Adrina, 'Family Planning Program in Indonesia and its impact on women', paper delivered at Hearing on Multilateral Population Assistance, Oslo, 1994. 8 Sonia Corrêa, *Population and Reproductive Rights: feminist perspectives from the South* (Zed Press 1994).

Not knitting an orgasm

Jon O'Brien argues that men's roles in family planning must change.

LIVING in the Republic of Ireland, I remember desperately splitting up packets of condoms that friends had brought home from their travels abroad. We lived in constant fear of the dangerous ignorance in which we were steeped; our ignorance about our own and women's sexuality, our fear of sex, of abnormality, of our bodies, of masturbation.

It was only natural for men to want to change that. Oh, don't get me wrong. It is

discover fatherhood in a new way and leave behind the heavy role of father as the removed object of fear and punishment in the family.

Men need to be creative in redefining their roles. Though how they have done this sometimes leaves much to be desired. I am suspicious of these so-called 'new men'. Media creation or not, I think the idea of a guy who will dedicate his life to being a super-feminist and knit you an orgasm in his spare time is a little far-fetched for me. No, the old man suits me fine; he just needs to transform himself.

But change is frightening. It is highly unlikely that men will ever reach the same understanding of contraception and sexuality that women have. Through sheer biological fact we are destined to remain different, separate and apart. Some of that difference is a cause for celebration. If we want men to take responsibility in reproductive health, we have to recognize that this does not mean that men can – or should – become the same as women.

Opinion surveys tell us that if a male contraceptive pill were to be developed, the majority of women would be unlikely to trust a man to take it. Men's involvement in reproductive health may be limited. However, this should not lead us to dismiss the contribution that men can and do make. An increasing number of older men in Northern Europe are choosing vasectomy, recognizing that their women partners have carried the burden of birth control in their relationships long enough.

Stereotypes of male behaviour cut off the dialogue necessary for change. And change is long overdue. ■

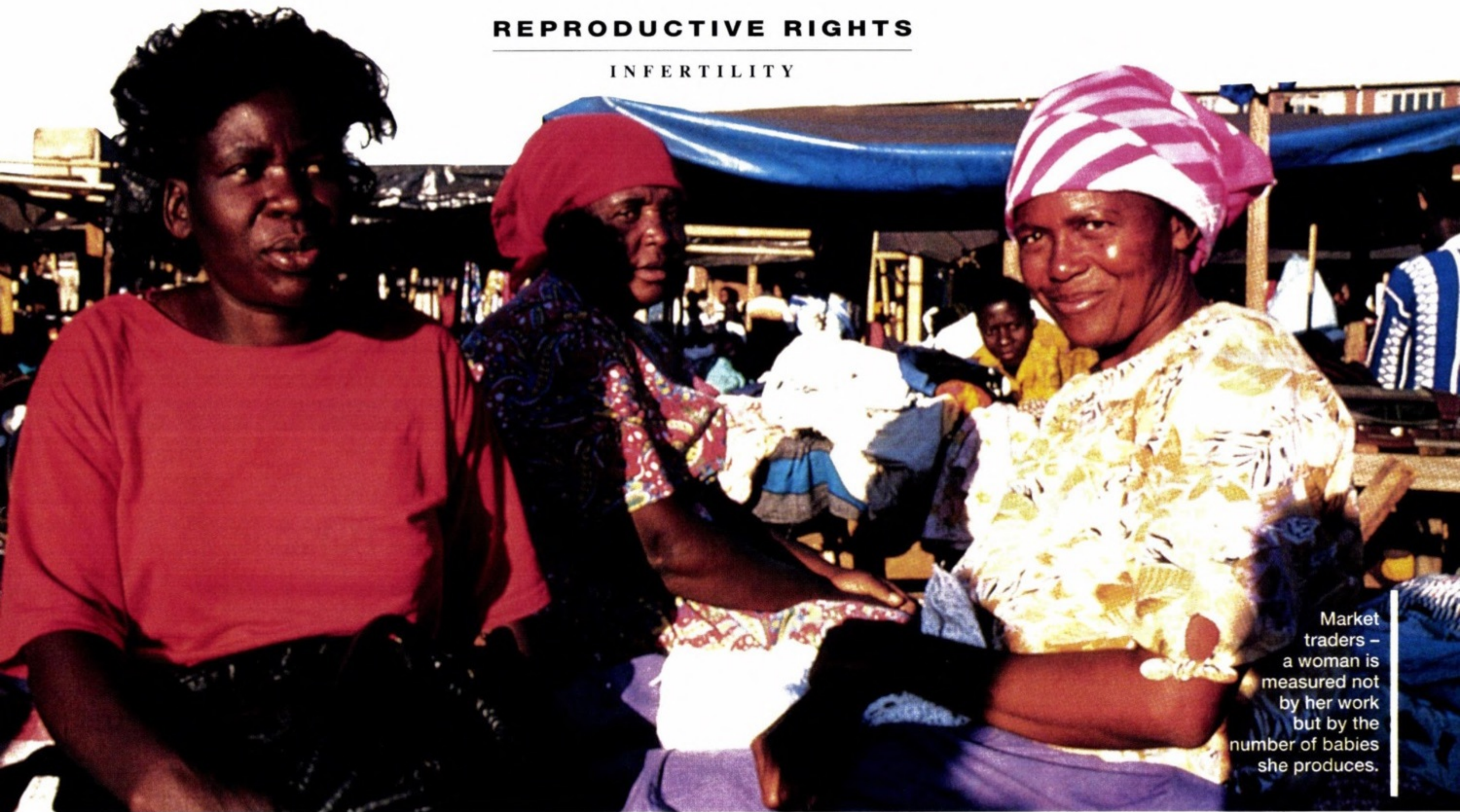
Jon O'Brien was a programme officer for the International Planned Parenthood Federation and now works for Catholics for a Free Choice. This is an edited excerpt from 'Men and family planning: so what did they talk about?' originally published in *Reproductive Health Matters*, No 3, May 1994.



Fatherhood: not a new man but a new way of being is what men need.

not always because we choose to or feel some deep concern for women. Very often, it is because women will no longer tolerate being with a partner who has the brain capacity of a bean-bag.

It is also because the traditional deal no longer satisfies our desires. Patriarchy imposes on men a whole set of unhappy behaviours. Under a new deal men can



Market traders – a woman is measured not by her work but by the number of babies she produces.

Our own gift

Infertility is not just a problem in the West. **Sue Njanji Matetakufa** reports from Zimbabwe on the battle to remove the stigma of childlessness.

BETTY CHISHAVA and her 56-year-old husband Herbert have been married for 26 years and have no children. This makes them a rarity in Zimbabwe where few couples last that long in a childless marriage, especially in a society where a child is valued more than its mother and a woman's worthiness is measured by her ability to reproduce.

When a pregnancy fails to materialize in Zimbabwe, women are always blamed. Relating the agony she has been through for 25 years, Betty vividly narrates how she has been publicly humiliated and ostracized by relatives, friends, neighbours and even her husband. Spiteful relatives insult her by using her first name in a culture where it is respectful to refer to adults as the 'mother or father of so-and so'.

Fertility is highly prized in Zimbabwe. Women without children suffer social rejection and are made to feel personally inadequate. Male fertility, on the other hand, is a taboo subject, to be concealed at all costs. Covering up for men is usually done through a traditional practice called *chiramu* which involves the clandestine bringing-in of the husband's close relative (usually a brother) to impregnate the wife.

Betty said her own parents came under

immense pressure when she failed to conceive. They could not stand the idea of their daughter being labelled barren. They tried discreetly to arrange for her husband's brother to go to bed with her. She rejected the idea outright, she says, because of her 'Christian principles'.

Experts have concluded that at least one in every four Zimbabwean women of childbearing age suffers from some degree of infertility. The pressure exerted on infertile women can be so great that even in the face of such deadly infections as HIV and AIDS some will take the risk and attempt to fall pregnant by multiple partners.

In desperation other women will go to the limits of faking pregnancy and even stealing newly born babies from unsuspecting mothers. They usually get caught and end up in jail. Meanwhile, infertile women are subjected to verbal and physical abuse from their spouses. In extreme cases some women are unable to endure the alienation and the pressure. They feel so worthless that they commit suicide.

Professor Jonathan Kasule, head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

at the University of Zimbabwe, says bluntly that 'the success of a marriage in Africa depends on a woman's ability to have children'.

'Society recognizes the family as the natural unit and basis of a society,' adds deputy health minister, David Parirenyatwa. 'If a couple has no children for two or three

JACKY CHAPMAN / FORMAT

Women without children suffer social rejection. Male fertility, on the other hand, is a taboo subject, to be concealed at all costs

years the tendency is for a man to seek another partner, to exonerate himself from the stigma of being the infertile one. Infertility becomes the cause of unfaithfulness and divorce follows.'

Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest infertility rates – along with other southern African countries such as Botswana, Namibia and Lesotho – and infertility is officially reported to be on the increase. Unfortunately, because of sub-Saharan Africa's high population growth rate this is largely ignored.

Traditional beliefs linking infertility to

witchcraft are rife. In fact, the main medical cause in both men and women is tubal blockages – the result of delayed or inadequate treatment of reproductive tract infections (RTIs). Disease-induced infertility accounts for the majority of cases in Zimbabwe. Only about five per cent of infertility is due to inherited or hormonal disorders.

In men the ability to produce quality semen can be affected by prolonged or recurrent infections. In women pelvic inflammatory diseases (PIDs) can lead to the blockage or scarring of the fallopian tubes. Although women may feel occasional pain, PIDs often go untreated because they are easily dismissed as period or ovulation pains.

But why is there such an upsurge of infertility in the country now? Health Minister Dr Timothy Stamps has a simple

mission statement that every woman has a right to be pregnant and to decide on the number of children she wants. But he also noted that the Ministry has undergone hefty budget cuts in recent years under belt-tightening economic reforms. He believes that he could not justify spending a lot of money on an infertile woman when primary health clinics, even in urban centres, can't afford basic drugs like paracetamol.

Even the country's long-established women's movements have not risen up to fight for the rights of infertile woman as they have successfully done in areas like violence, sexual harassment and abuse. The Women's Action Group (WAG), the country's largest women's organization, has run theatre workshops and produced a booklet in the country's two main languages to try and demystify the traditional beliefs that are associated with infertility and to urge that those who are infertile be accepted into society.

'It's a big but sensitive problem,' says Edna Masiyiwa, health information coordinator for WAG. 'It's not talked about; but there is a need to lobby for the cause of the infertile woman.'

Meanwhile, others rely on less scientific methods. A religious sect calling itself 'The Apostles' offers faith healing to 'cure' infertility. The best-known faith healer is Boniface Muponda who claims to have helped at least 22,000 infertile couples conceive last year. He uses holy water and prayer and says that some of his 'patients' come from as far afield as Europe and the US.

But is faith healing the only solution for women like Betty Chishava? She feels that it is society's attitudes and prejudices against infertile people which need to change. Infertile people, she argues, should be accepted just as physically disabled people are.

In 1996 she decided she'd had enough. Together with two other women she set out to establish a support group for infertile women. The first of its kind in the country, if not in the region, they called it the *Chipo Chedu Society*, a vernacular expression meaning 'our own gift'. The name itself suggests an acceptance of infertility as something to work with, not against.

The response has been overwhelming. Chipo Chedu also provides counselling services to the infertile and is planning to set up funding to assist its members with high medical fees for specialized treatments such as the test-tube baby program. If Betty has her way, no infertile woman will have to go through what she did.

Sue Njanji Matetakufa is a Zimbabwean journalist with special interests in women and health. She also chairs an association of media women in the country.

THE woman's hand fumbled nervously with the tissue, crumpling it again and again until it couldn't get any smaller. She looked scared and cowed in the cheery police office where she had been brought on the Friday night she was raped.

But it was her sigh that conveyed a more frightening thought. There was about her a sense of the inevitable: it was almost as if Hilda had not been surprised by the young man who sprang from the bushes

Ferial Haffajee reports from South Africa where the legacy

of apartheid is making changes to reproductive health a slow and tortuous process.

Cross the



Young mother: but Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest infertility rates.

answer: 'They (sexually transmitted infections) are on the increase because we (men) are more promiscuous than before.'

On the other hand, traditional healers, who are trusted by many, believe the increased use of modern oral and injectable contraceptives is the main reason for the rise in infertility among African women.

Despite its profound social consequences, infertility treatment attracts little in the way of public-health resources. Instead attention is placed squarely on limiting the number of babies. The National Family Planning Council did open a small infertility clinic in the capital, Harare, in the mid-1980s. But the Government has admitted it was not being 'serious' in helping people with fertility problems. 'We just give them the mechanics, do a few procedures, give them some pills, but don't go deeper into the real issues.'

I asked Dr Stamps whether his Ministry was prepared to spend \$1,500 for a high-tech operation such as in-vitro fertilization to help a sub-fertile woman get pregnant. He repeated his Ministry's

and threatened to stab her.

Her husband too seemed without rage as he clasped his wife's hands when the police took them back to their rough zinc hut later that night. As he held up the barbed-wire fence for her to climb through all he said was: 'We had a little trouble today.'

Rape poses a great conundrum to South Africa's fledgling Government. A woman is raped every 36 seconds. Last year this translated into almost 50,000 rapes, which police say must be multiplied 20 times to get closer to a real figure.

Violence is sown into the fabric of South African life. In an already very patriarchal African society, apartheid came along to amplify the levels of family violence, battery and gender oppression. When a brutal government deprived them of land, identity and dignity many men

turned on their wives and girlfriends, beating them. Dark townships without street-lights became a breeding ground for gangsters who raped for power and pleasure – and who still do.

In the past four years the African National Conference (ANC) Government has ushered in great changes for women, including new abortion laws, better primary healthcare and creative reproductive health policies.

But reproductive health and family planning are still tainted concepts in South Africa where apartheid governments withheld basic healthcare from blacks and spent millions on population control in its macabre experiment in social engineering. Thousands of women in the past died at the hands of back-street abortionists who plied a dubious and shadowy trade. Many women remain infertile today, lucky to have escaped alive.

Once in office, the ANC began to undo the damage. Free healthcare was introduced for pregnant women and children under six years old. Other changes like free pap smears and cervical cancer testing are on the cards.

Against a groundswell of objection (which saw the pro-life lobby injecting mock foetuses with larger-than-life syringes on national television) the Termination of Pregnancy Act was also passed – paving the way to free and safe abortions. Between February and December last year 26,406 safe abortions were carried out.

Despite the real progress many women remain powerless or frightened. Barbara Klugman is the director of the Women's Health Project which has helped the Government to pioneer some of the best changes. Klugman says nothing will happen until three basic issues are dealt with: 'A lack of human rights, a lack of dignity and a lack of respect.'

While laws and policies have changed, power relations remain unchanged. Many women are denied abortions by their husbands or boyfriends, who still see children as bounty. In the Western Cape, community workers who tried to introduce contraceptives in squatter camps found again and again that women were not allowed to use them. They were even powerless to ask their partner to wear a condom, although many accepted that he had several sexual partners. 'My husband has a girlfriend; he's actually threatened to leave and to beat me up if I take the Pill or the injection,' said one woman.

Those women who do manage to negotiate change in their homes and lives face another obstacle when they get to hospitals and clinics. Many doctors and nurses have firm opinions on contraception and often refuse to perform abortions. Some women

resort to the back-streets again because they can't stomach the humility of being admonished at state hospitals.

Non-governmental organizations complain that 'help lines' meant to provide women with urgent counselling and advice often go unanswered for days. Young people (who comprise almost one in two South Africans) don't use the counselling service, either because they don't know about it or because they face negative attitudes from health professionals.

'Nurses are always angry, they think we are young and should not use condoms. They put you off when you go for condoms or injections. Their attitudes are bitchy,' says a young man from Gauteng.

True liberation, in the field of reproductive health at least, must first cross these minefields of attitudes and knowledge. Among young and old myth still takes the place of information. A young man from Kwazulu-Natal says: 'Maybe Coke can help, the bubbles may disturb pregnancy.' So, apparently, does gin (especially effective when the whole bottle is drunk neat) and perhaps even the digestive effervescent Eno.

Aloma Foster has just completed the first-ever sexuality training course for senior-school teachers. She found that teachers passed on these myths to students and that homophobia was rampant. Conservatism was the order of the day and teachers blindly taught only 'abstinence' to

'My husband has a girlfriend; he's actually threatened to leave and to beat me if I take the Pill or the injection'

young people – who on average begin to have sex when they are 12.

A classroom game called 'The Choice' was developed as a fun and innovative way of presenting the sexuality choices young people face. But teachers vetoed it and it lies to this day in store-rooms around the country.

Nonetheless, Foster feels the effort has been worthwhile. 'The response from black teachers has been very heartening. Many will take it back to their communities because they're not only teachers, they're leaders.'

Trainers like Foster realise that cutting-edge policies and path-breaking legislation alone do not make healthy nations. Before women (and the country) can truly reap the benefits of reproductive health, she believes South Africa must cross the chasm from violence and fear to freedom and choice. ■

Ferial Haffajee is Economics Writer with the *Mail & Guardian*, an independent weekly newspaper in South Africa. She has also worked as a radio producer and television reporter.

sing chasm



GIDEON MENDEL / NETWORK



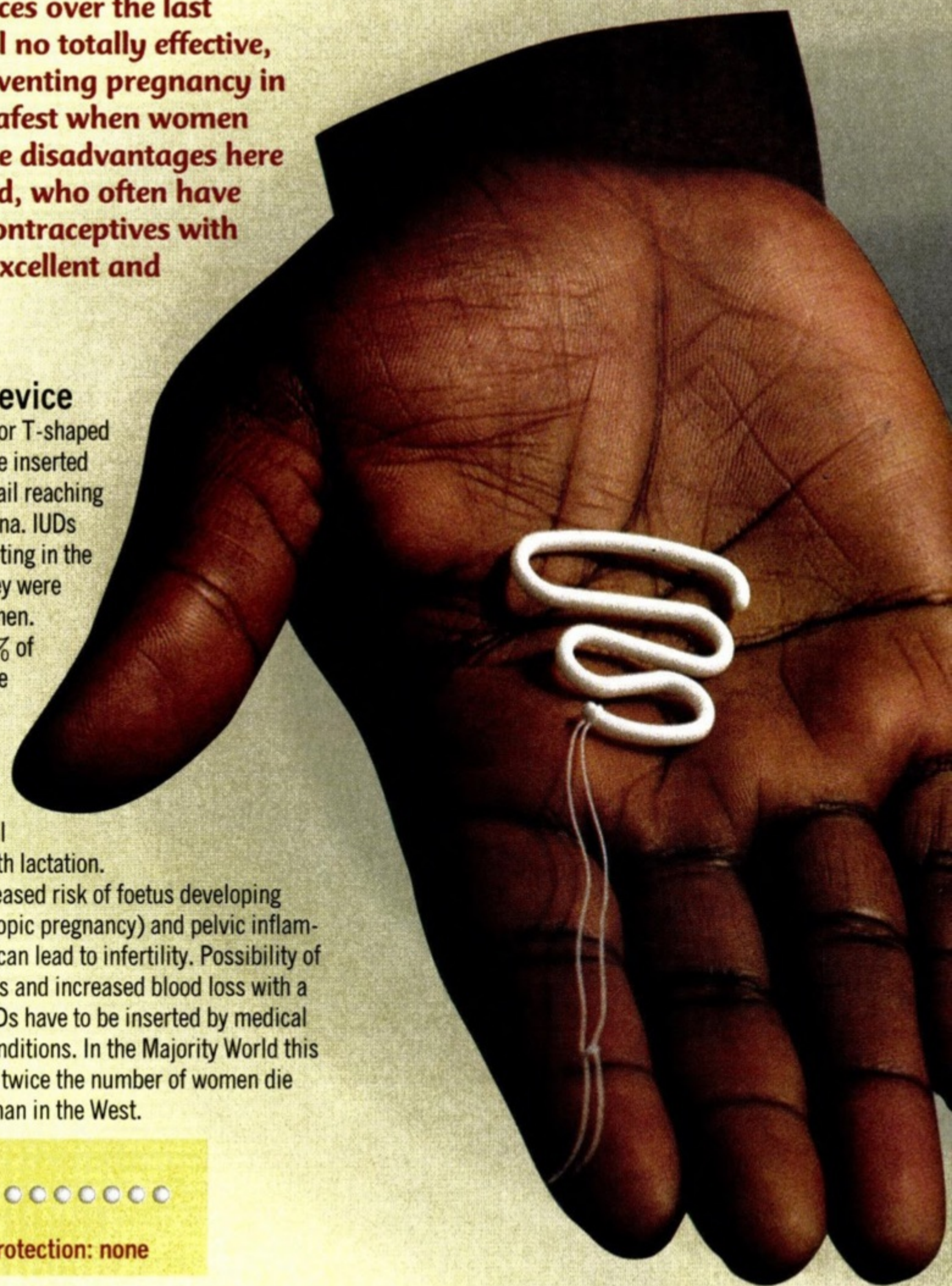
GISÉLE WULFSOHN / PANOS PICTURES

How many precious minutes have you wasted pondering the perfect form of contraception? I'll let you in on a secret. There's no such thing.

If it is effective in preventing pregnancy, it may be bad for your health; if it stops you getting infections it may interrupt intercourse. Only condoms offer any protection against HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. And almost all contraceptives are aimed at women.

There have been huge advances over the last 20 years. However, there is still no totally effective, completely safe method of preventing pregnancy in heterosexual sex, though it is safest when women have both information and control. Many of the disadvantages here relate primarily to women in the Majority World, who often have neither. Here we profile the six most common contraceptives with a 'pill' rating between one and ten – ten being excellent and one being appalling.

FUMBLING IN THE DARK



Sterilization

The most widespread form of birth control, this involves cutting the fallopian tubes in a woman or the vas deferens in a man. This method accounts for a third of contraceptive use worldwide and almost half in the Majority World. Despite the fact that the operation is more complex, far more women are sterilized than men. By 1992, 140 million women and 42 million men had been sterilized.

ADVANTAGES Effective and permanent, though for men it may take several months for sperm to disappear completely from semen. Few side effects if the operation is performed in appropriate conditions.

DISADVANTAGES Suitable only for those who are certain they want no children or who have completed their families. Has been a major tool in population control campaigns where people have been sterilized against their will or without their knowledge. Needs sterile conditions and trained medical staff. The most common complications of female sterilization are anesthesia-related problems, internal injury and infection. There may also be long-term side-effects such as heavier menstrual periods or lower back pain.

NI RATING:

Effectiveness ●●●●●●●●●●

Safety ●●●●●

HIV/AIDS/STDs protection: none

Inter-uterine device

A small coiled, looped or T-shaped plastic or copper device inserted into the uterus with a tail reaching down to the upper vagina. IUDs prevent the egg implanting in the womb. In the 1980s they were used by 60 million women. IUDs now make up 24% of contraceptive use in the developing world but only 8% in the West.

ADVANTAGES Long-term protection which doesn't upset hormonal balance or interfere with lactation.

DISADVANTAGES Increased risk of foetus developing outside the womb (ectopic pregnancy) and pelvic inflammatory disease which can lead to infertility. Possibility of heavy bleeding, cramps and increased blood loss with a danger of anaemia. IUDs have to be inserted by medical personnel in sterile conditions. In the Majority World this is often not possible – twice the number of women die from such infections than in the West.

NI RATING:

Effectiveness ●●●●●●●●●●

Safety ●●●●●

HIV/AIDS/STDs protection: none



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Injectables

Contraceptives injected into women over one-to-three-month intervals. These include Depo Provera, Noristerat, Cyclofem and Mesigyna. All contain either progestin alone or both oestrogen and progestin. They have been heavily promoted in population programs and some were approved for use in the US in 1992 and in Canada in 1997.

ADVANTAGES Last for 2-3 months with no possibility of user failure and no action needed at time of intercourse.

DISADVANTAGES Side effects include: skin disorders; increased bleeding, tiredness, headaches, nausea, depression, hair loss, weight gain, loss of libido, delayed return to fertility. Risk of birth defects if used during pregnancy and possible link cancers of the breast, cervix and lining of the womb. Concerns expressed about the impact on bone density in young women. Injections need to be given in sterile conditions by trained medical personnel and with adequate follow-up. In the Majority World this is often not possible and can result in women not understanding why the drug is being given or not being warned of the possible side-effects.

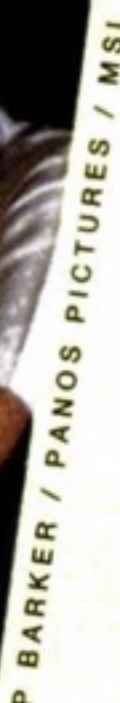
NI RATING:

Effectiveness ●●●●●●●●●●

Safety ●●●●●

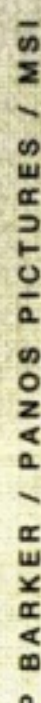
HIV/AIDS/STDs protection: none

DISADVANTAGES Need to be used just before intercourse so requires co-operation between partners. High failure rate compared to other contraceptives. Occasional allergic reactions and toxic shock syndrome for women leaving diaphragms in too long and higher rates of urinary tract infection among diaphragm users.



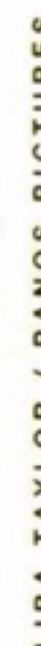
Diaphragm: very little

In the Majority World the Pill is often sold over the counter with no explanation and no way of monitoring the Pill-user. If women take the Pill while breastfeeding this can reduce milk supply which may contribute to infant malnutrition, and undermine breastfeeding as a natural form of contraception. There are also risks of the hormones affecting infant development.



Safety ●●●●
HIV/AIDS/STDs
protection: none

HIV/AIDS/STDs protection: none

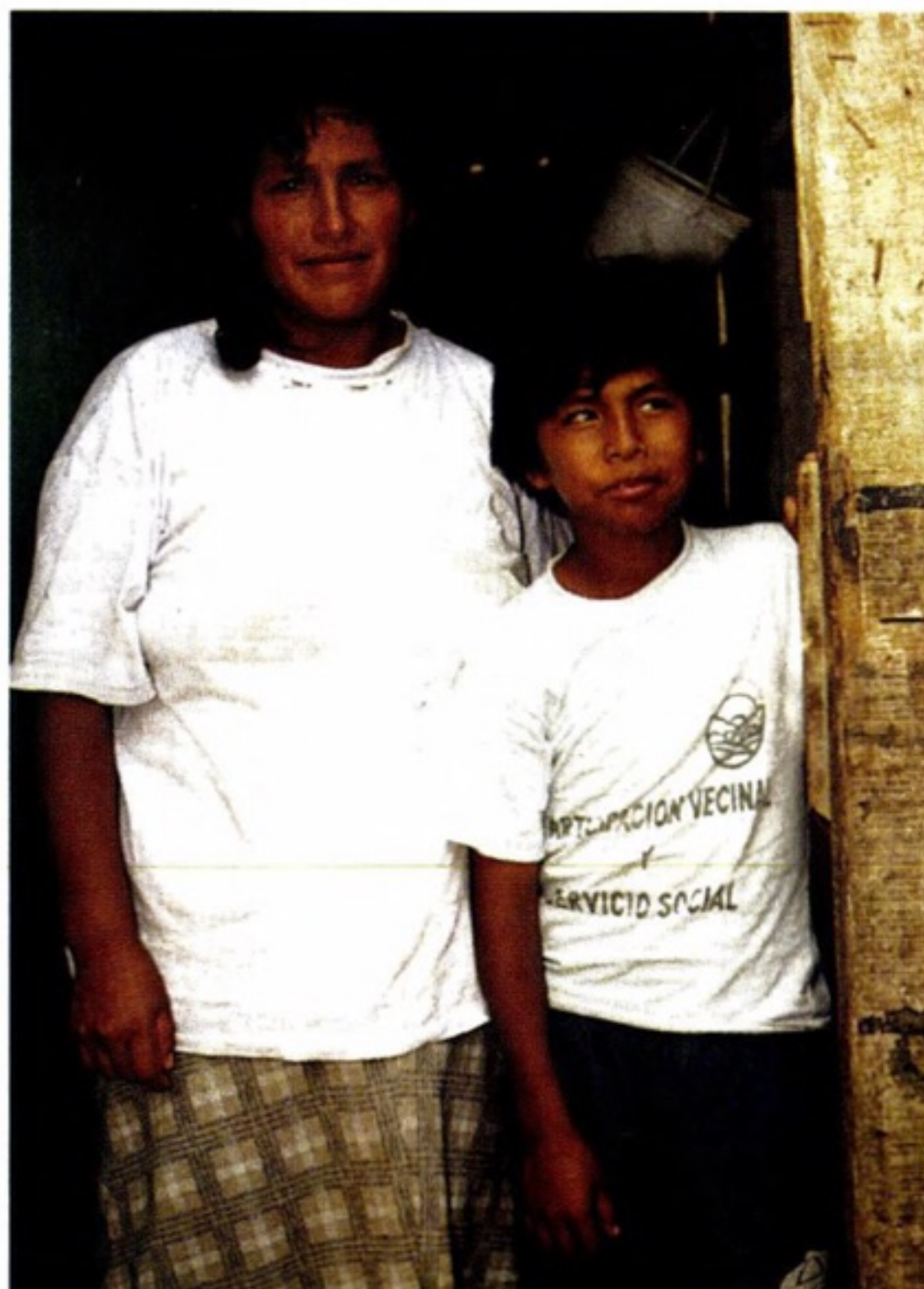


Source: Betsy Hartmann,
Reproductive Rights and Wrongs
(South End Press 1995).
With thanks to Kate
Grosser for
research.

Peru has been heralded as a family-planning 'success story'.

Since 1961 the country has reduced its fertility rate from six children per woman to three-and-a-half. But the line between planning families and controlling

population is a fine one – as **Stephanie Boyd** found out when she met some of the 110,000 women who were sterilized last year.



Reluctant volunteer: Leopoldina (left) who now suffers from nausea, pain and fatigue.

Secrets and lies

LEOPOLDINA Vega hasn't felt well since her operation. Peeking out shyly from behind the door of her house, she is at first reluctant to talk about her experience. After some reassurance she finally consents to tell her story. The thirty-one-year-old mother of five complains of nausea, pain and fatigue. She speaks of health workers who bullied her into having her tubes tied. They said it would be so 'simple' her husband would not find out and she would be home working the same day. She describes the consent forms she signed but being illiterate did not understand. And she shudders when she tells how she and three other

vaccination campaign last May.

Investigations by opposition politicians, local journalists and a US congressional subcommittee have uncovered numerous cases of coercion and abuse in poor communities across the country. Peru's Office of the Public Defender is investigating thirty-five cases of illegalities in tubal ligation operations, including nine deaths from alleged complications and unsanitary operating conditions. Doctors performed about 110,000 such sterilizations in Peru last year (more than three times the 1996 figure) and 10,000 vasectomies as part of a Government birth-control campaign.

Leopoldina's neighbour, Martha Mallón, has had problems urinating since she was sterilized. After her fifth child in June last year workers at the government clinic convinced her to have her tubes tied the following day. 'They said I would be able to care for my children better and that I would not have any more.' When she told her husband he was furious. After learning about the side-effects and consequences from the media she now regrets the whole thing.

The local press has labelled the campaign 'an attack on Peru's poor'. But the meaning didn't sink in until I went to visit the community where Leopoldina and Martha live. It's a small settlement tucked inside an up-market development called *La Molina*. This Western-style suburb is complete with paved roads, mowed lawns and convenience stores, while the two women live in rough shacks and collect water from a single tap at the bottom of the hill. The

Government's logic was clear: their community was an eyesore and an unwelcome blight on its wealthy neighbours. Why should it be allowed to grow?

However, what struck me most about Leopoldina and Martha's community was not the poverty, but the possibilities. Its people are survivors, having left their homes in the Sierra during Sendero Luminoso's armed violence of the 1980s and built new lives in Lima. Although houses are without running water, the settlement is not a 'slum' and the people are not starving or malnourished. Their children play in streets which are free from garbage or sewage. Houses have electricity and many are equipped with televisions. Reforms like piped water, paved roads and a health clinic to provide real choices for family planning would not be difficult. But infrastructure would only encourage the inhabitants to stay. And the Government's response is clearly not about building futures, but about simple population control.

In February 1998 a delegation from Peru travelled to the US to testify before a Congressional Subcommittee on International and Human Rights Operations. Peruvian physician Héctor Chávez described the pressures on doctors to perform sterilization operations. Two women also testified – one claiming she was sterilized without her consent and the other that she was bribed with monthly food shipments.

Dr Chávez told the Subcommittee that women were not given adequate information about the irreversibility or the risks involved prior to their operations. He also

...reproductive health was taken away from the women themselves once it was finally deemed 'important'

women were lined up on tables to be operated on the same day, one after another. Lastly she recalls the doctors who abandoned her after it was over, dropping her off at home and never returning.

Reports she has seen recently on television of women who have died or suffered severe complications after being sterilized have made her anxious. 'My health isn't important,' says Leopoldina, her voice wavering. 'It's my children I worry about. Who will take care of them if I die?'

Residents say health workers tried to convince women with four or five children to consent to tubal ligations during a

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

STERILIZATION

said that many doctors disagreed with the sterilization campaign, suggesting they were pressured into performing the operations for fear of losing their jobs.

Chávez said his regional health department required full-time personnel to sterilize two patients a month and contract workers to sterilize three. Joseph Rees, chief council of the US Congressional hearing, concluded: 'I don't think there is any question that women in Peru, especially very poor *mestizo* [mixed race] women, have been misled into having sterilizations and that in some cases they were lied to, or offered food, in exchange...'

The Peruvian Government denies there are quotas and maintains that abuses are the fault of individuals and not the health system. A few weeks after Dr Chávez's delegation returned to Peru he was dismissed from his post for not 'fulfilling his duties'.

The media hype has brought forth opinions – and raised battle flags – from all sides of the reproductive health debate. Women's groups have long been at war with Peru's influential Catholic Church for its rigid stand against birth control and abortion rights. Church leaders are claiming their position protects women's health and rights, while the notion of 'family planning' is just another disguise to control women's bodies.

High-profile reports in the *New York Times*, *Miami Herald* and *Washington Post* have provoked international condemnation of the Government's campaign. And in the US there is also concern that American aid dollars may have been used to fund the

sterilizations – though aid officials in Washington claim that this is not the case. Nonetheless, before the abuses were made public Peru's family planning program (one of the most ambitious in Latin America) received praise from both the UN Population Fund and the World Bank for reducing the country's population growth rate.

The Peruvian women's organization *Flora Tristan* is struggling to determine the number of women affected. Already hundreds have come forward claiming they were misinformed, tricked, pressured or offered gifts or money if they agreed to the operation. And it is not yet clear how much women's groups working in the field of reproductive health knew about the abuses – but kept silent – until the media safely broke the story. Although government agencies perform nearly 80 per cent of Peru's tubal ligations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often work loosely with government departments or are aware of what's happening in the communities where they work. Whether they receive direct government funding or not, NGOs in Peru can't function without Lima's consent. Treading too harshly on government toes is never wise.

But the dilemma for the women's groups goes beyond the compromising position of funding. Family-planning activists fear losing all they've worked for if donors become wary of funding programs or if a conservative backlash frightens women away from clinics and turns birth control back into a taboo subject.

The sterilization campaign was the first time the Government had run a women's health program without enlisting the help of NGOs or community groups. And this gets to the crux of the problem. After working

for years to raise awareness about the importance of reproductive health, the issue was taken away from the women themselves once it was finally deemed 'important'. In President Fujimori's dictatorial style, the campaign was scripted to achieve maximum public-relations points: he announced it at the UN Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

Mary Vargas, a lawyer working with the Peruvian women's group *Demus*, says that women's health should be decentralized, taken from federal government and given to local groups who work closely with women and know their community's needs. Vargas cautions that fixating on numbers and population neglects the social aspect of women's reproductive health, which is heavily influenced by factors such as education, access to economic resources and legal protection.

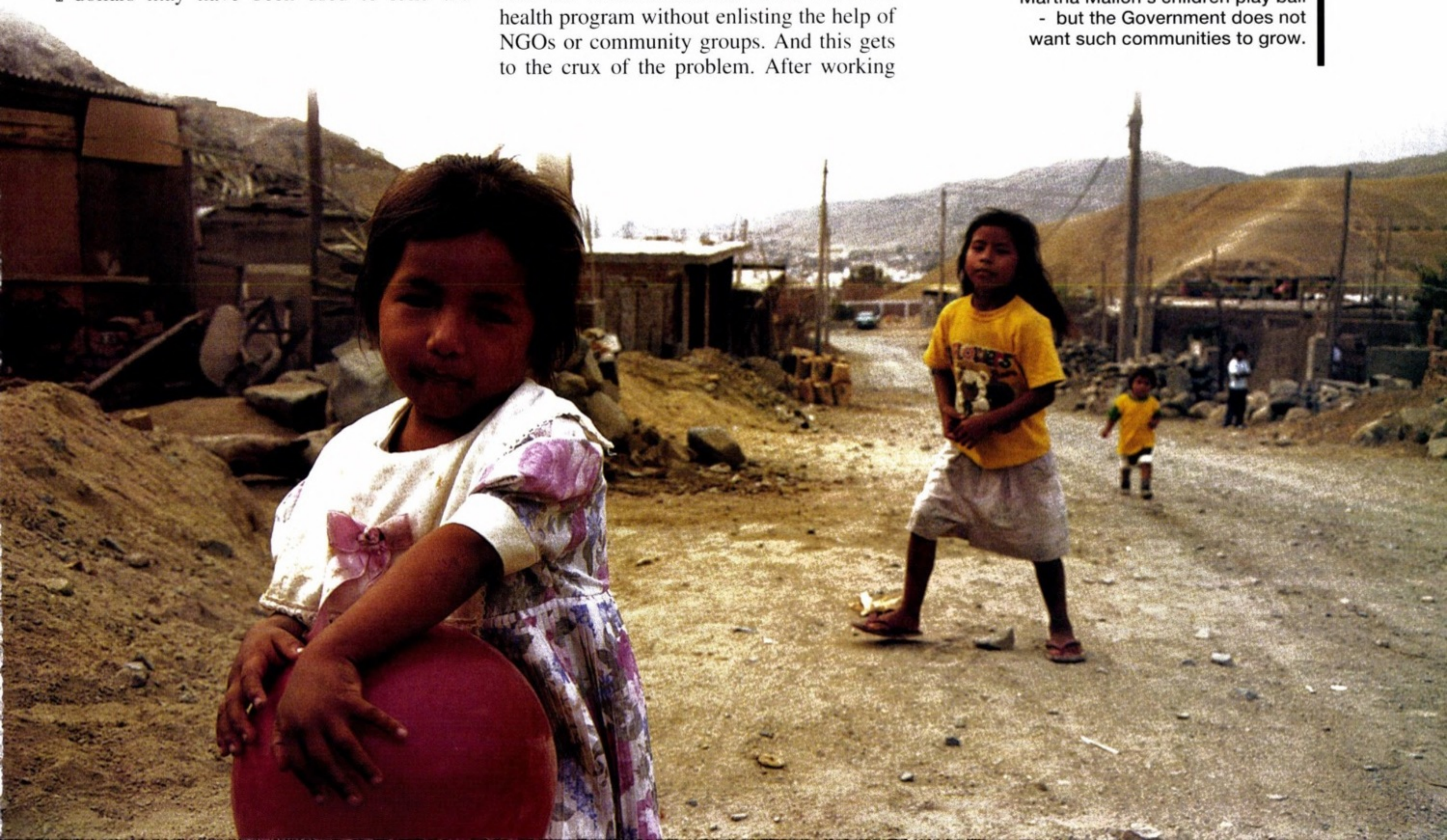
It is these social and political factors that must be changed in order to create a fair and representative family planning program. Like other women's activists, Vargas argues that demographics and population control should not take precedence over women's right to control their own bodies. She insists that having access to reproductive health methods and proper information is 'a fundamental right for women everywhere'.

Stephanie Boyd is the associate editor of *Latin America Press*, a weekly news publication based in Lima, Peru.

For further information contact the Peru Support Group. e-mail: perusupport@gn.apc.org

Martha Mallón's children play ball
- but the Government does not
want such communities to grow.

BOTH PHOTOS: KEN EAKIN



Population paradoxes

At the end of 1997 there were nearly 6 billion people in the world. Global population is currently growing at the rate of about 80 million people each year (down from the early 1990s when the figure was 85 million). The UN's medium projection for 2025 puts the figure at 8.04 billion and for 2050, 9.37 billion.

BUT:

★ The prospect of a decrease in population producing a better world with more resources for everyone is not as straightforward as it seems. A person in the North consumes 8 times as much energy as someone from the South and 1.3 billion people in the developing world live on less than a dollar a day.¹

★ Women everywhere are having fewer babies. The decline is steepest in the North but is also mirrored in the South. Because there are so many women of childbearing age, lower fertility rates have an impact on population growth.

★ Countries like China with more than a billion people will have a big impact on world population even if the fertility rate stays low.

★ The highest fertility rate is in sub-Saharan Africa. But since the population there is relatively small (593.7 million) the increase will have little effect on total world population.

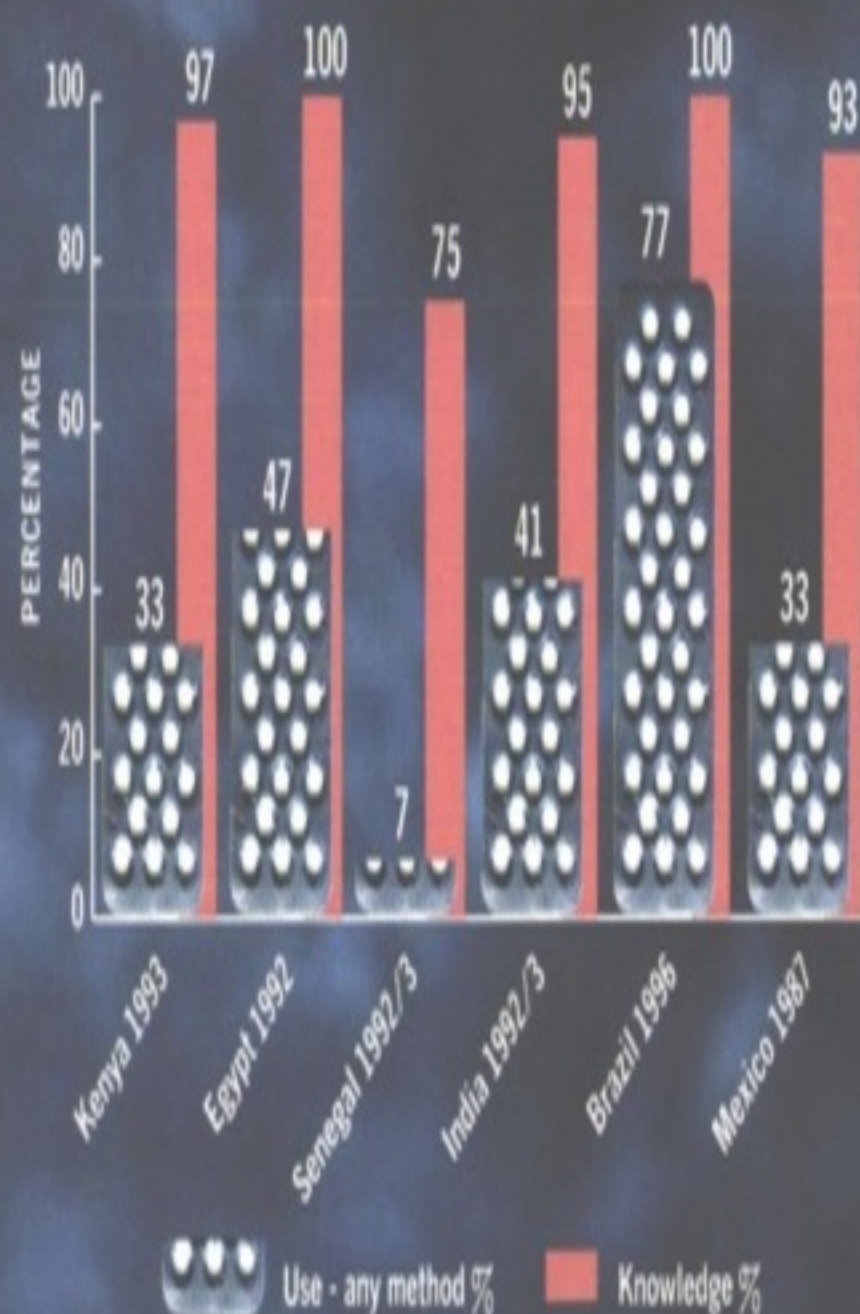
Unmet need

No contraceptive method is 100% effective. Nonetheless, access to, and knowledge about, contraception is essential if women are to give birth safely to the number of children they want.

Nearly 60% of men and women use contraception. But an estimated 350 million couples lack the information or access they need to a range of methods and services. Worldwide, between 120 and 150 million women who want to limit or space future pregnancies are unable to do so.

At 67%, North America has the highest usage of modern contraceptives while Africa has the lowest at 15%, although these figures do not include traditional methods.

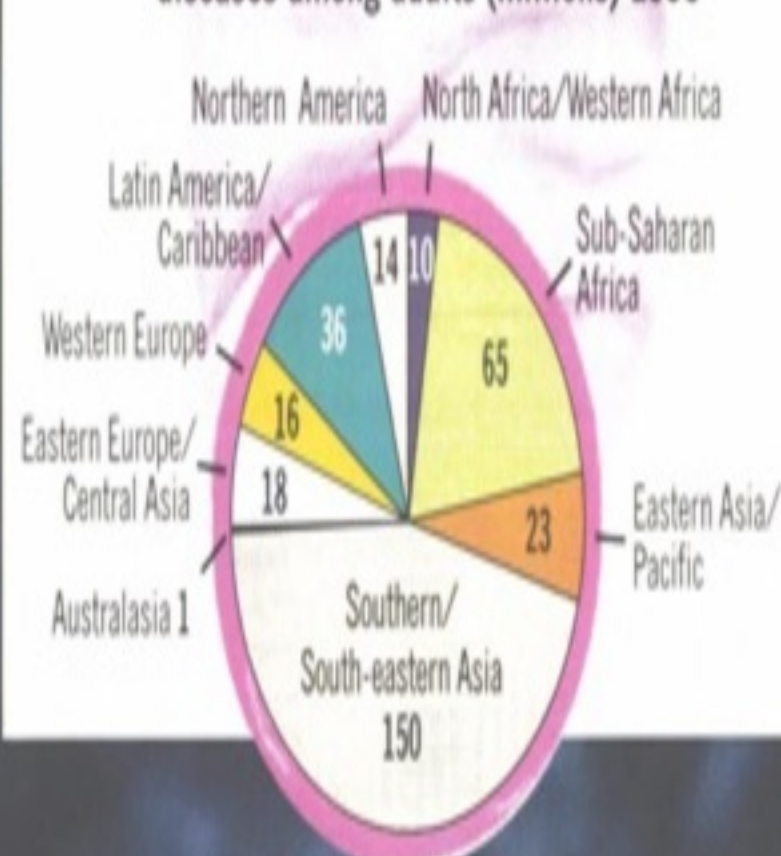
Contraceptive use and knowledge of traditional and modern methods (for currently married women)²



Sexually transmitted diseases

There are more than 333 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) every year. Of these nearly 6 million are AIDS/HIV, 90% of which occur in developing countries. (Barrier methods of contraception which reduce the risk of HIV account for less than 5% of contraceptive use in the South and 25% in the North). Worldwide, women contract STDs at more than 5 times the rate of men. STDs are the second-most important cause of diseases for women aged 15-44 in developing countries, after deaths and illnesses related to pregnancy and childbirth. They are most frequent in young people aged 15-24.³

New cases of curable sexually transmitted diseases among adults (millions) 1995



THE FACTS OF LIFE - AND DEATH

Giving birth is a dangerous business. One woman dies every minute from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Thousands more suffer temporary or permanent disabilities. Much of this is due to poverty. In developing countries 20-45% of women of childbearing age do not have enough to eat and nearly two-thirds of pregnant women are anaemic, suffering the long-term effects of

ill-health.¹

In many countries basic health services do not exist, often because of cuts made by governments trying to impose structural-adjustment programs. The cost of basic reproductive health for all women has been estimated at \$17 billion each year.² This amounts to just \$2.90 per person per year - or less than the world spends in one week on arms.

Women at risk

The number of women who die for every 100,000 live births varies from an average of 27 in developed countries to an average of 479 in less-developed nations. For each death, another 13 women suffer from a less serious threat to their health. Most maternal deaths are in the Majority World. An African woman is 500 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than a woman in Scandinavia. However, poor or minority women everywhere are most at risk. For example in the US black women face a risk nearly four times as high as white women.⁵

Maternal mortality 1990⁷

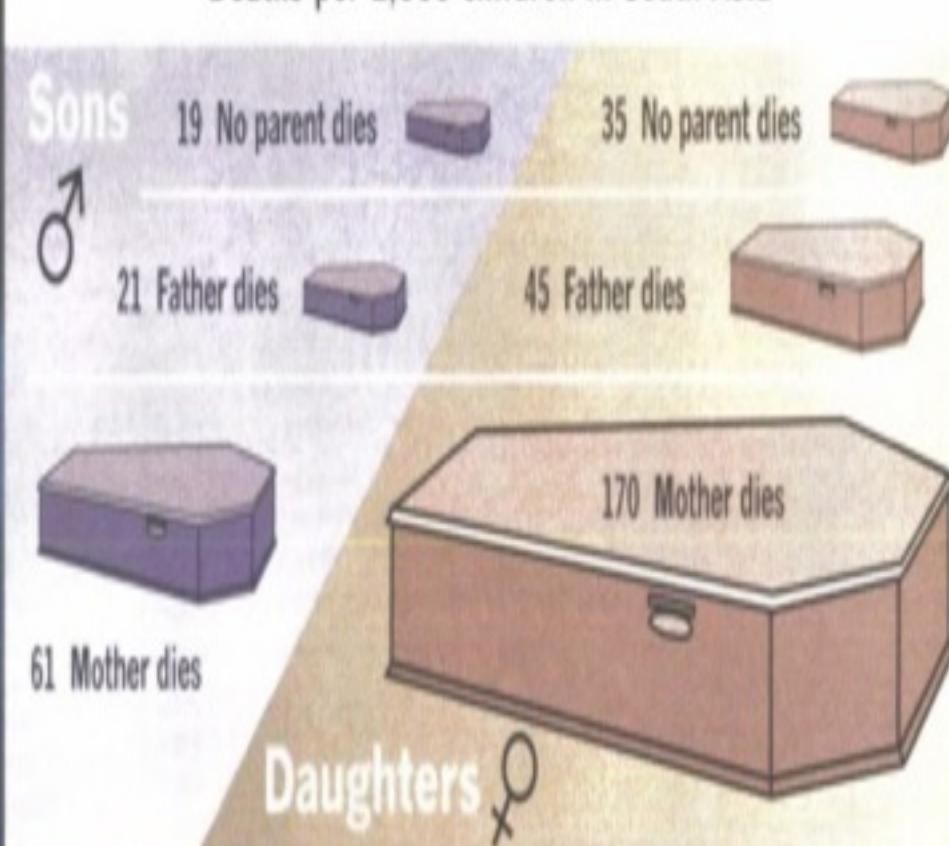
Number of maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births



Small lives

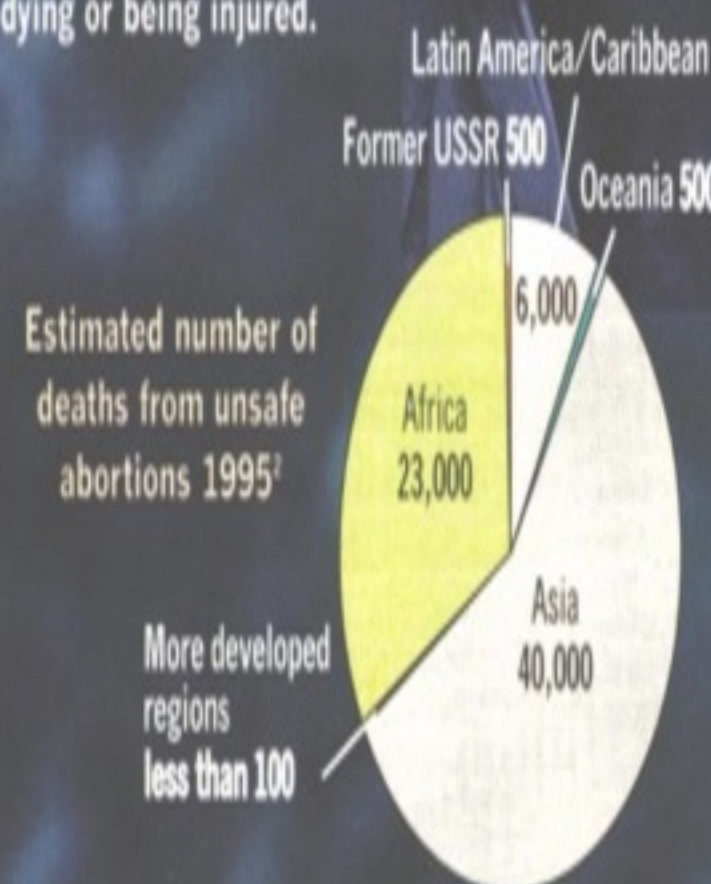
Young children who suffer the death of a parent are more at risk of dying themselves. In South Asia, the death of a mother puts a child's life in danger more than the death of a father. For a girl, the death of her mother increases the chances of dying by 400%.

Deaths per 1,000 children in South Asia⁴



Unsafe abortions

There are an estimated 20 million unsafe abortions each year and more than 70,000 abortion-related deaths, most of them in the Majority World. An unknown but much larger number suffer infection, injury and trauma. Where abortion is illegal, the number of women resorting to unsafe abortion increases - and so does the danger of them dying or being injured.



1 Patricia Smyth, *Women and Health* (Zed Books, London 1992) 2 *The State of World Population 1997* (UNFPA) 3 *Human Development Report 1997* (UNDP) 4 *Demographic and Health Surveys Program*, MacroInternational, US. Figures for India from India National Family Health Survey. 5 World Health Organization: *An overview of selected curable sexually transmitted diseases* (WHO 1995) 6 World Health Organization 1993. Other sources: *Progress of Nations* (UNICEF 1997); *State of the World's Children* (UNICEF 1997); *World Health Report 1997* (WHO).

When does a foetus
become a baby? What
happens when the choice
is between the life of a

HERE is a brain-teaser.

It happens around 55 million times a year. Sometimes it is a surgical operation, sometimes not. Sometimes it is legal, sometimes a crime; sometimes it is even referred to in a national constitution. It is viewed by one group of people as 'callous and brutal murder' and by their opponents as 'the key to a new world for women'.

We are talking about abortion. If it all sounds bewildering to you, imagine the thoughts and feelings of a pregnant 14-year-old girl, who wanted to end her pregnancy and found herself forbidden to leave the country because of courts of law citing the constitution of the Republic of Ireland.

Abortions are illegal in Ireland. But ever since 1967, when abortion became legal in Britain, thousands of Irish women have been coming to England every year to end unwanted pregnancies. The schoolgirl, raped by a school-friend's father in his car, pleaded with her parents to take her to London for an abortion.

Because of the pending trial for rape, the family had told the Irish police of their planned trip to London and its purpose. This tip-off sparked a furore in 1992 which swept Ireland into months of political crisis and instability.

The family were in London when the Irish police phoned them. 'You have to come home,' they ordered. The girl talked of suicide. The police officer said that going ahead could mean prison. The threat had been prompted by a Dublin High Court ruling that was based on the fact that the Irish constitution defined abortion as an illegal act. 'Miss X', as she was known to the public, found herself caught up in a nightmare, as Ireland's top lawyers wrangled about the Irish constitution and the rights of a raped child threatening to kill herself.

The world – and indeed the Irish public – watched with absolute horror. Many of those who had voted for the special constitutional ban on abortion – a much more far-reaching step than making it simply a crime – had never imagined that it would result in such cruelty. After weeks of courtroom argument the girl was permitted to leave the limelight and to end her pregnancy.

The crisis which her case provoked could only happen because there is a worldwide controversy about abortion. The Irish teenager is one of thousands of girls

mother and the life
of the unborn?
Janet Hadley
looks at both
sides of the
abortion debate.

A moral question

and women who find themselves pregnant and do not want to continue the pregnancy. They do not seek the experience of abortion, they would far rather not have become pregnant in the first place. But so desperately do they wish not to bear a child (for whatever reason and there are many) that they choose abortion. And they do so whether it is legal, safe and affordable as it is in some countries or illegal, dangerous and costly, as it is in many other places.

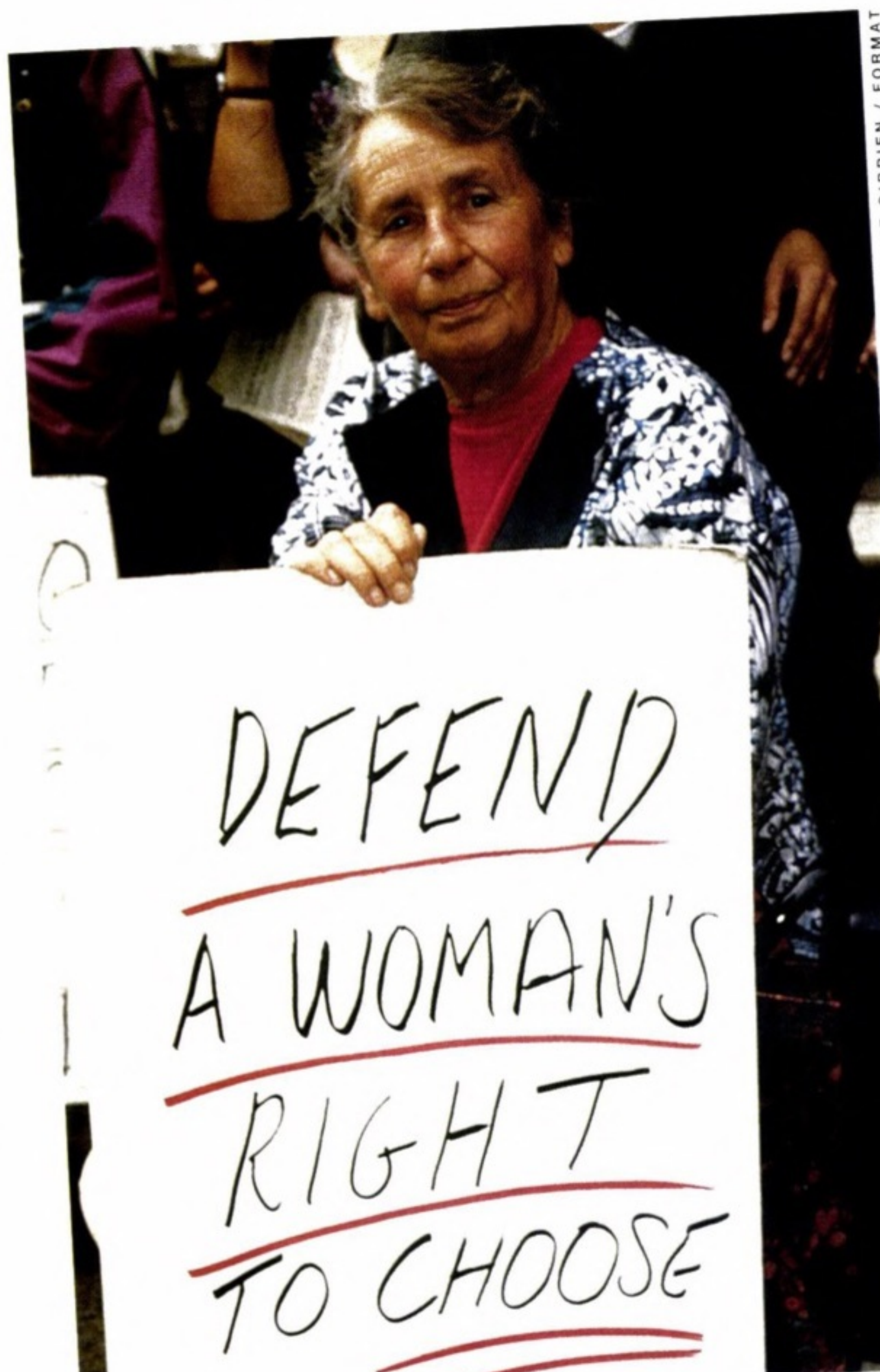
It is impossible to detach abortion from the question of women's reproductive rights. A quarter of the world's population lives in countries in which abortion is severely restricted or is defined as a crime. The World Health Organization estimates that 55 million abortions take place every year and around half are performed in unsafe conditions, usually because abortion is illegal or inaccessible.

Pain and danger are the hallmarks of

unsafe abortion – as many as 550 women die every day from trying to end unwanted pregnancies. Their deaths are needless and preventable. When abortion can be performed early in pregnancy by a skilled person using modern techniques, it is safer than having your tonsils out. Laws against abortion only succeed in making it painful and dangerous. They do not stop it happening.

Yet all over the world the campaign against abortion continues.

In Poland, the end of the communist regime in 1990 brought an end to an abortion law which had been amongst the most permissive in the world. All but three per cent of the operations which were previously allowed are today a crime. People came out on huge demonstrations for and against abortion rights. Parish priests threatened to withhold Catholic sacraments from anyone who did not sign their petitions against



JOANNE O'BRIEN / FORMAT



The great divide - between those who believe abortion must be part of women's contraceptive choice; and those who think it is murder.

a person? Does it enjoy full moral rights, equivalent to those of a seven-year-old child or an unwillingly pregnant seventeen-year-old woman? You either believe that is so or you do not. Scientists cannot agree.

Prenatal technology - ultrasound, hi-tech photography - can now provide us with fantastic inside-the-womb images as the foetus grows and develops. The campaigns against abortion have exploited these images and isolated them. We're shown pictures of brilliantly lit fetuses - floating as if they were space-walking and (this is very important) as if they were somehow alone, or just happened to be inside a woman's body. The point of such images is not only to make them resemble fully developed babies. Foetus = baby. It is also to deny the role of the mother - who becomes nothing more than a kind of animated container in which the foetus happens to be growing.

But women do not carry fetuses around hidden, like keeping something in the trunk of the car for nine months and then remembering it. So, in order to complete the picture, abortion opponents have to portray women as cold, self-centred, silly baby-haters, who are 'the enemy'. Calling women murderers does the job nicely - it is the most common abuse hurled at women outside abortion clinics in the United States.

There is no middle ground, no halfway point where 'the moral truth' is waiting to be discovered. That is why the debate over abortion is more often a slanging match than a dialogue. Because the arguments about abortion usually centre on the 'rights of the unborn', defending women's right to have access to abortion is hard and therefore, politically unpopular. It is not easy to argue that making abortion safe, legal and affordable is the only way forward and that making abortion a crime is doomed to fail because it not only doesn't save 'babies', but it also kills women. Not

many votes to be won down that road.

But doesn't making abortion legal and safe make it too easy and lead to high abortion rates? Sounds logical. Except that the safest and easiest place in the world to get an abortion is the Netherlands, which also has the lowest abortion rate in the world. The reason for this is an extensive use of reliable contraception. It is a paradox that so many of those campaigners who condemn abortion also condemn contraception and especially giving contraceptives to young, single people.

Here's something else that sounds logical. You often hear people say that no-one should need abortions, because contraception makes it unnecessary. They point to places like Russia where abortion is legal but modern contraceptives have been almost unavailable. Women there have abortions again and again because it is the only way they can limit their family size. Now that contraception is being introduced more widely the number of abortions is falling. It sounds compelling.

But there is no such thing as a 100-per-cent reliable contraceptive. You could make abortion a crime and throw contraceptives around till people were knee-high in pills and condoms. But a third of all abortions would still happen, even if everybody used the most 'reliable' kinds of contraception. (And the most 'reliable' kinds are not always the most suitable for a particular woman's health.) People who use contraception do so because they want to plan their families, to have children when they can afford it, and to feel that

Women do not carry fetuses around hidden, like keeping something in the trunk of a car for nine months and then remembering it

their children are wanted and welcomed in every sense. That is widely regarded as responsible behaviour. If it is, we cannot force those who are unlucky with their contraception (or maybe even a little careless) to continue with unwanted pregnancies.

Banning abortion is a fool's errand. In Poland, within months of making abortion a crime, there were clear signs that women were still finding ways of ending unwanted pregnancies. Better-off women were paying

'killing innocent children'.

The fundamental argument of those who oppose abortion anywhere is deceptively appealing. Its simplicity is precisely what makes it unsuited to being translated into law - as the Miss X case so blatantly highlighted. The basic anti-abortion argument boils down to a moral question. There are also anti-abortion arguments concerning the safety of abortions - abortion makes women ill, even mad, say the campaigners. And there are 'feminist' anti-abortion arguments: abortion allows men to evade their responsibilities towards women whom they have made pregnant.

But the bottom line of the case against abortion is always the same. Foetuses should have the same moral claims as women because the foetus, from the moment of conception, is a live human person - and so abortion is no different from murder.

Keeping the focus on the foetus has been the constant theme of opposition to abortion. Of course, from the moment of conception there is life as well as a potential person.

But is an embryo or a foetus the same as

to travel abroad – to Russia or if they could afford it to Germany or Holland. Poorer women paid with their health or even their lives. The police mortuaries began to receive bodies bearing witness to botched abortions. Dead newborns began to turn up in fields and woods and reported miscarriages increased.

Even where the laws severely frown on abortion, as in the Philippines, opponents want to make the rules even harsher. Despite laws which already make abortion

abortion, nor guarantee that women will have access to safe, affordable methods of ending their unwanted pregnancies. In India, for example, abortion has been legal since 1971. But acute shortage of medical facilities and doctors means that for a great many of Indian women safe abortion is still beyond reach. Illegal abortions outnumber legal operations.

Access to safe abortion is also fraught with difficulties in the United States, thanks to the fanatical anti-abortion lobby there. Although the right to early abortion is protected under the US constitution, the majority of individual states have imposed restrictions on teenage access to abortion. A pregnant teenager rarely has money to pay for an

abortion and wouldn't know where to go if she did. No wonder the main effect of the restrictions is later and riskier abortions for those who can overcome the hurdles.

The rates of unwanted pregnancy among young, single women are rising worldwide. In Latin America, that most Catholic of continents, as many as 60 per cent of pregnancies among women under 20 are unwanted and one in five deaths among Brazil's young women is caused by

illegal abortion. Outlawing abortion does nothing to stem this tide of death and ill-health; sermons against 'teenage promiscuity' do not stop young girls getting pregnant.

Any day now an 11-year-old Brazilian girl known as M, pregnant as a result of rape by a 38-year old man, is about to give birth. She has become as much of a pawn in Brazil's abortion controversy as 'Miss X' was in Ireland. M hid her condition from her father, but when he found out he petitioned for an abortion – which was allowed by law because of the rape and the dangers of giving birth at 11 years of age. He said he feared carrying and delivering a baby would kill her. The case became national news. The day before the operation anti-abortionists marched on the town where M and her father lived, noisily reminding them that the Pope had called abortion 'an abominable crime' and persuading the father that his daughter's life is not at risk.

All over Brazil the campaigners have kept up their pressure so that even when an abortion has been sanctioned by the courts, many state hospitals turn away the women who seek help. Thousands turn to illegal abortion services, thousands more give birth to children they neither wanted nor

Like all good healthcare, we desire it but hope we don't have to use it

a crime and enshrine in the constitution for the foetus's right to life, estimates are that 17 per cent of women in Manila have had an abortion. Post-abortion medical complications rank as the top reason for women's admission to hospital. Now, in a new bill which places abortion on a par with murder or rape, the perpetrators of illegal abortions, and the women who undergo them, may face the death penalty.

The law itself can neither get rid of

Sense of the faithful

Polls show that four out of five Catholics disagree with the official Church position, which forbids the use of contraception under all circumstances. **Rosemary Stasek** explains why she is one of the dissenters.

I was born and raised a Catholic in eastern Pennsylvania but moved to Los Angeles several years ago. I had always been active in parish life until the day when I was asked to leave the young adult group in Redondo Beach because of my pro-choice beliefs.

Good Catholics just don't up and discard Church teaching in one day. It is a process, a realization that what the Church is saying on an issue is in direct contradiction to something in our own lives. When it dawned on me that the church was not making sense in the areas of women's status, birth control and abortion, I needed to learn more. In the process I found out things you don't learn in Catholic school or hear during the homily in Mass.

The history of the Church's teaching on abortion is far from consistent. If we look at the penances St Augustine established for the 'sin of abortion' we see an interesting picture. He differentiated the sin based on the reasons why a woman had an abortion. Were they economic or sexual reasons? We see a penance given for an abortion to a woman who is married, has several children and may have difficulty affording to raise another. The penance in that situation is much less severe than that given to a woman who had an abortion to conceal sexual sins, namely fornication and

Worn correctly, it can prevent unintended pregnancy, AIDS, and abortion.



Catholics for Contraception

adultery. This is a very clear indication of the Church's early attitudes towards sexuality. It is sexuality that is being punished, much more than the sin of abortion. If they were punishing the sin of abortion, there would be no consideration given to the circumstances.

Later, St Thomas Aquinas' teachings on abortion centre on the question of 'ensoulment': when does a being gain an immortal soul and therefore become eligible for salvation? Aquinas sets some very clear

Between a rock and a hard place: this woman has come from Southern Europe to have an abortion in Britain.



JOANNE O'BRIEN / FORMAT

can afford. Many, like M, are still children themselves.

What really counts for women, anywhere in the world, is to know that a sympathetic and accessible abortion service is there if they need it. Like all good healthcare, we desire it but we hope we won't have to use it. Abortion is a health issue: of that there is no doubt. It is also a moral issue. Women decide on abortion aware that they destroy life, but also aware that they have responsibilities which they know they cannot meet if the pregnancy continues – to the child that would be born, to other children, even to themselves. It is also a political issue – a matter of women's sexual and reproductive freedom. So despite the Pope's denunciations, despite mass handouts of contraceptives, abortion will take place. Its denial is a punishment of women – for having sex. ■

Janet Hadley is writer on women's health issues and the author of *Abortion: between freedom and necessity* (Virago 1997).

'The bishop's mitre should be a symbol of justice and mercy, not a rigid rejection of human sexuality', says this advert from Catholics for a Free Choice.

guidelines on when ensoulment occurs: at 40 days for a male foetus and at 80 days for a female. Abortions were allowed up to this point. Even Pope John Paul II refers to the unborn as 'that which is in the process of becoming'. It is a recognition that there truly is a continuum of life in development.

Since Catholics do not hold to a literal interpretation of the Bible, a great deal of our belief derives from the traditions of the Church – as we see there is no unbroken tradition of teaching on abortion.

Tradition also includes the ultimate authority of the Pope, in that Catholics endow him with infallibility. This is a poorly understood concept among most Catholics. Infallibility occurs when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* ('from the chair'). He takes upon himself the teaching authority of the Church and speaks. We must obey these infallible doctrines to be called a Catholic. In fact, the Pope has spoken *ex cathedra* on only two occasions: both were to proclaim feast days to honor Mary, the Mother of Christ. This leads to an awful lot of confusion, but in fact everything else the Pope says is not infallible. Teachings on birth control are not infallible, teachings on

divorce are not infallible. Nor are the teachings on abortion.

While abortion is not an infallible teaching, it is an excommunicable offence. Canon 1398 states that anyone who procures an abortion is automatically excommunicated. The exceptions are interesting: the penalty does not apply to women under 17 and to those who act without full 'imputability'. This applies to those who act in sincere good faith.

There are two fundamental teachings which are essential to thoughtful dissenting Catholics. The first is the theology of 'probabilism'. The Latin is *ubi dubitum, ibi libertas*. It means 'where there is doubt, there is freedom'. The history of the Church's teaching must at the very least generate some doubt.

The second relevant theology is the most traditional Catholic doctrine: the primacy of conscience. Each individual is called to form their conscience through the teachings of the Church, science, reason, the theologians and the 'sense-of-the-faithful'. The sense-of-the-faithful is clear on the matter of birth control – the people have flatly rejected the Church. The sense-of-the-faithful is less clear on abortion, but it doesn't even approach the ranting of our bishops.

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church is

squandering its considerable moral authority with its stance on these issues. Catholics aren't leaving the Church, they are just ignoring their leaders.

To be Catholic and pro-choice is to stand on opposite sides of a police line from Operation Rescue, the militant anti-abortion group, and yet say the rosary with them. To be Catholic and pro-choice is to be called to a 'ministry of dissent'. Episcopal Bishop Sprong from New Jersey said that

St Thomas Aquinas sets some clear guidelines on when ensoulment occurs: at 40 days for a male foetus and 80 for a female

Catholic women who are pro-choice should leave the Church for the sake of their humanity.

I can't leave the Church. I am a Catholic. I love the Church – and it's stuck with me. ■

Rosemary Stasek is the co-founder and director of California Catholics for a Free Choice. She works as a webmaster for corporations in Silicon Valley and serves as an elected City Council member in Northern California.

Catholics for a Free Choice, 1436 U St NW, Suite 301, Washington DC 2009, US. Tel: +1 202 986 6093. Fax: +1 202 332 7995. e-mail: cffc@igc.apc.org

Memorabilia



A small wooden box
unlocks the secret that
has been kept for
many years. A story by
Shashi Deshpande.

As children, this had been a magical place for us, the room in which we'd transformed ourselves into exciting other beings – almost always queens and princesses. There were never any kings or princes, I remember, in our games. I think it was the finery that fascinated us four sisters. Old saris, bits of brocade, beads and bangles – why would we turn our backs on these to become men?

Now, looking at the box room, my only thought is; how quickly can I get through sorting all this stuff? I am worried that my mother will be reluctant to let go of things, apprehensive of a struggle with her. But to my surprise, she lets me do what I want with most of it, putting aside only the box of old photographs and her sewing machine. She's been this way ever since I told her about our decision – a disguised ultimatum, really – that it was time she gave up this home and lived with each of us in turn.

'Don't let her wriggle out of it,' my sisters warned me, but her ready acquiescences put an end to all my carefully rehearsed arguments. And we were left with a silence between us, a silence that to my guilty mind was dense with unspoken words: our impatience with her demands, our squabbles about whose turn it was to visit her; our complaints – 'for God's sake, doesn't she realize I have my home, my family, my life?'

Worse than her silence was her total passivity; she seemed to be waiting for me to tell her what to do next, like I had once done, holding out my hand, as it were, for instructions on what I was to do with my

day. It was unnerving, but I had hardened myself. Pushing my advantage, I suggested that we start clearing things straight away.

So here we are in the box-room, surrounded by what she has so carefully stored over the years, treasures which have suddenly become trash. My murmurs have been met by her studious silence and suddenly I am exhausted by this behaviour, which seems so much like my adolescent daughter's mutinous non-cooperation.

'Let's complete this tomorrow,' I say and like a student released from an unwelcome task, she gets up. And then her eyes fall on something. 'Oh, but I want that,' she says with the urgent passion of a child. 'That' is a wooden *kumkum* box, which women once used for their combs and pins and the *kumkum* with which they mark their foreheads. It is in a sorry state, the

wood discoloured, the lid in two pieces and the mirror, held precariously by one of the pieces, so spotted that it reflects nothing. But my mother, sitting down, props up the mirror with some difficulty and looks into it with the earnestness of a woman making up her face. Then, with infinite gentleness she puts the mirror face-down and says: 'This was my mother's.'

I know my mother lost her own mother when she was a child. She has never spoken of her, perhaps because she was never part of her life. But now, sitting in the box-room, in the midst of the memorabilia of her life, she tells me the story of her mother's death.

'She died in childbirth,' she begins. 'I was only seven when she died.'

As she retrieves her memories, I can see that these are things she has not thought





pains began. My mother had four younger siblings and at home women were constantly having babies; so the child knew in a hazy kind of way what was happening behind the closed doors. The muffled cries, the bustle, the women rushing in and out – none of these were strange or frightening for her.

‘But by night things had changed. We went to sleep as usual, but we were left to ourselves. My sister kept crying and I tried to soothe her, but it was impossible. We must both have fallen asleep some time and when they woke me up I thought it was morning. I went out into the backyard to relieve myself and I could see that the stars were shining bright and the cattle were still in the shed. So it was still night after all.’

She pauses for the first time since she began and in the silence I see the child squatting in the starlight listening to the rustle of cattle in the straw, unaware that these are, for her, the last few moments of her mother’s life.

‘I went back into the house. I must have been very confused because I went straight to the room my mother was in. They were lifting something – it looked like a bundle of old clothes. Then I saw the long hair streaming down almost to the floor and knew it was my mother. Somebody noticed me and said ‘What are you doing here?’ and shut the door on me. But not before I saw the blood – it was everywhere. She must have died just then. She bled to death. The baby was born dead.’

She stops again before going on. ‘We went back home then and for a while they made much of us. But such things happened often: women died, men married again and children grew up somehow. Like we did. There were enough women at home to look after us and after some time we scarcely felt her absence. She seemed to be forgotten. They rarely spoke of her and the few times they did, it was as if they were blaming her for her death.

‘She was so stubborn,’ I heard the women say. ‘She wouldn’t listen to anyone.’

I felt guilty when I heard them, as if I were associated with my mother’s wrong, whatever it was. And I was puzzled too. Why was it her fault?

‘Years later, when I was having my first child...’ Her eyes, fixed in an unseeing stare on my face, don’t seem to take it in that I am that first child. ‘...I realized that women went to their parents’ home only for their first baby. Why did my mother go home each time, and to a place where there was no other help than a village midwife? I asked my aunt – my mother’s sister – about it. And I heard then what my mother had

said. ‘If I’m here,’ she insisted, ‘I may have a little more time between babies.’” That last time she was really desperate, my aunt told me.

‘My sister was a strong woman, but what choice did she have?’

I haven’t noticed my mother’s tears until now when she gives a gulping sob like a child recharging herself with her grief.

‘That was her seventh child. And she was scarcely thirty. Six living children and God knows how many dead. Who counted the dead ones in those days?’

Unable to sleep that night, I hear the grandfather clock tick the minutes, chime the hours. Sounds that have kept my mother company in the years since my father died. What will we do with the clock? Can we find a place for it on our walls? Or for her photographs and sewing machine in our

I see the child squatting in the starlight, unaware that these are, for her, the last few moments of her mother’s life

homes? My mother and I have never been very close. Yet today, in the room where my sisters and I had transformed ourselves into exciting other selves, my mother has revealed her true self to me. I can remember her holding a shell to my ear, saying ‘Listen, can you hear the sea?’ And in a while I thought I heard it, the distant boom boom of the waves. Now, in the forgotten tragedy of her angry, desperate mother’s death, it seems to me I have heard the resonances of her own life as well. ‘What choice did she have?’ Repeating her aunt’s words to me, she had added: ‘I understood what she meant when I was expecting my fourth child. Another girl, but I was luckier. I didn’t have to try again.’

The plan my sisters and I had so carefully plotted lies in shards all about me. I can no longer be part of it. I have to tell my sisters. I can imagine the expostulations, the reproaches, the angry cries that will greet my decision. ‘Why?’ they will ask me. ‘What has happened?’

I don’t know. My mother is still the same person, ageing, isolated, friendless, incapable of living alone yet reluctant to give up her home. I know that there will still be those periodic cries for our visits, the reproach if we don’t comply. No, nothing has changed. And yet everything has. I can’t explain to them, but if I tell my sisters the words ‘What choice did she have?’, will they understand? ■

Shashi Deshpande is an Indian writer and novelist. She has written five novels including *The Long Silence*.

ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA HALL

about for years: the memories emerge with a child’s focus, a child’s directness. When she speaks of visiting her grandparents’ home, I sense the joy of a town child in the freedom and open spaces of a large village.

Sometimes the memories seem to be revelations even to her. When she speaks of a day when she went out to play with the older children, leaving her little sister crying for her at home, I see on her face the child’s fear at her mother’s rage, the puzzled, resentful ‘What have I done wrong?’ look.

But, except for this once, she does not speak of her mother at first. And yet I am aware of her constant consciousness of her presence. I get the sense of a woman who has retreated from everything, even her children, absorbed in the child to be born, preparing for the task of giving birth.

And then she comes to the days the

1 Snake skins and crocodile dung

Women have always found ways of preventing unwanted babies. The 4,000-year-old Kahun Papyrus, the oldest written document on birth control, refers to vaginal pessaries made of crocodile dung and fermented dough. Arab traders were the first to use inter-uterine devices. When taking camels to market they placed small stones in the uterus of female animals to avoid them becoming pregnant on the way. Condoms made of linen and from the skin of sheep, goats and even snakes were used in many societies. In the ruins of Pompeii, the Italian city engulfed and preserved by volcanic lava 2000 years ago, dilators and curettes were found similar to those used for modern abortions. Other early forms of birth control included bloodletting, glass or metal diaphragms, cotton soaked in lemon, dried fish, mercury and a variety of other herbs and chemicals.



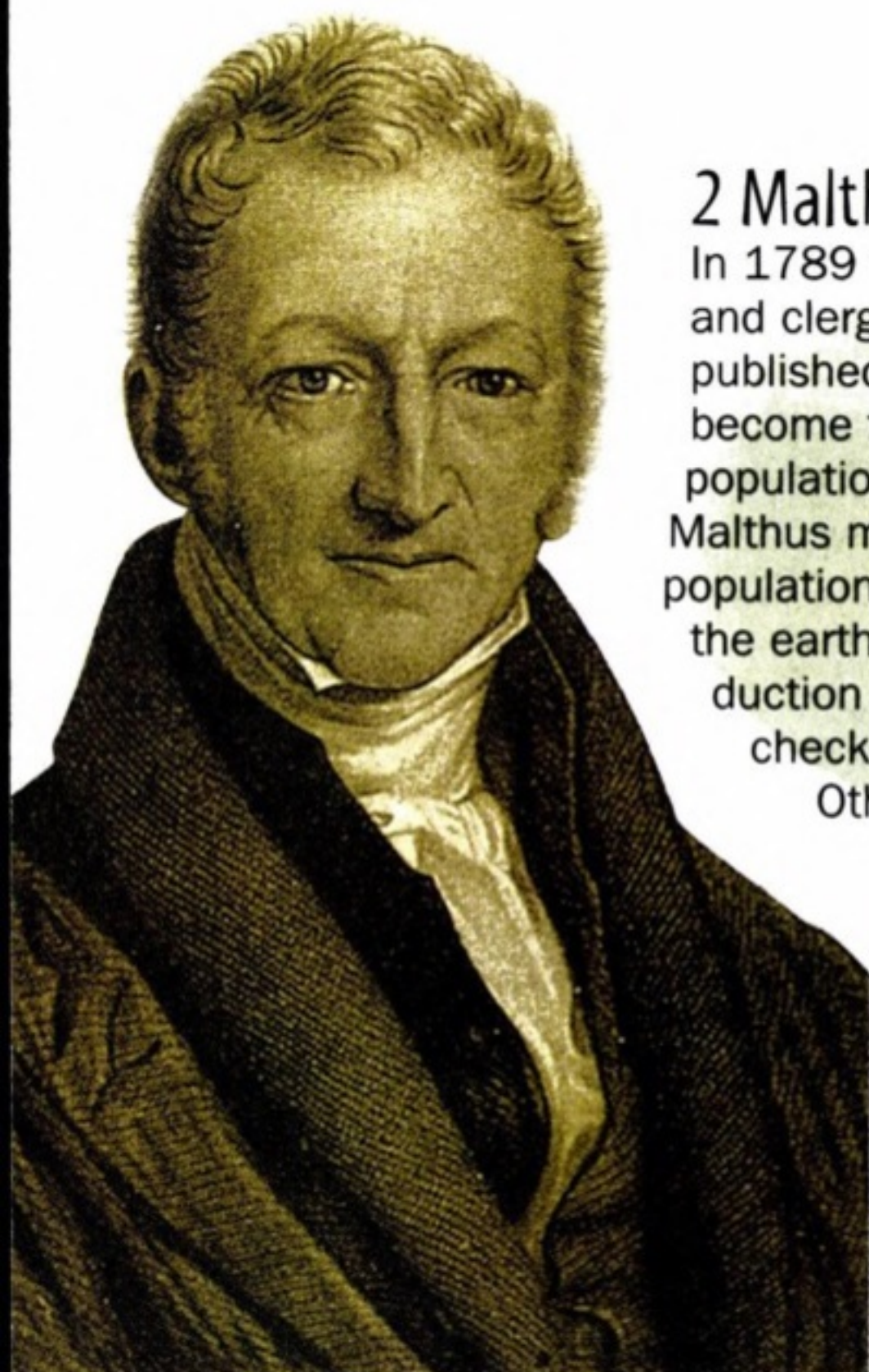
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

2 Malthusian misery

In 1789 the British economist and clergyman Thomas Malthus published figures that were to become the cornerstone of the population-control movement. Malthus maintained that world population would rapidly outpace the earth's capacity for food production unless 'preventive checks' were put in place.

Otherwise, he claimed, overpopulation would bring untold 'misery' in its wake – poverty, famine, pestilence and war.

From socialism to eugenics – Margaret Sanger, who first coined the term 'birth control'.



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A history of reproductive control and contraception

3 Feminists and fascists

At the beginning of this century Margaret Sanger, a socialist and feminist from New York City, coined the term 'birth control'. Sanger and her colleagues saw birth control as a way of freeing women from the yearly tyranny of pregnancy and birth. But there was a fine line between this and dictating who should be allowed to have babies.

The famous anarchist Emma Goldman was arrested for distributing a pamphlet entitled *Why and How the Poor Should Not Have Many Children*. And Sanger too moved in that direction.

From there it was a small step to 'eugenics' – the belief that society can be improved by selective breeding. Eugenicists felt that poverty was a sign of genetic inferiority. They maintained that rich people were superior to poor, whites superior to blacks and the able-bodied superior to the disabled. The eugenicists were to become a powerful force in the politics of population control. By 1932 compulsory sterilization laws for the 'feeble-minded' and 'physically defective' had been passed in 27 states in the US.

But it was German fascist leader Adolf Hitler who pushed eugenics to its most extreme. In 1933 Germany passed sterilization laws (modelled on those developed by the US Eugenics Record Office) which led to 200,000 sterilizations of 'genetic inferiors' and the murder of millions of Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals in Nazi gas chambers.

4 Mass sterilization

After World War Two the focus of population control moved to the Majority World, where populations were burgeoning while those in Europe and North America were slowing down. India became a keen advocate of birth control, a policy which eventually culminated in the mass sterilization of 6.5 million people in 1976 during the 'Emergency' of Indira Gandhi (below). Hundreds died from infections due to botched operations and the program sparked riots and demonstrations in many cities, leading to the Government's fall in 1977.

In the same year Dr Reimert Ravenholt, the head of USAID's population office, publicly hinted that the Agency intended to sterilize a quarter of all women in the developing world. Today 90 per cent of the 137 million women who have undergone surgical sterilizations are in the Majority World – 32.5 million as a result of mass campaigns in China in 1983 and 1991. In several Asian nations, substantial rewards, including cash hand-outs, have been offered to people who undergo permanent sterilizations. These financial incentives are difficult to resist when people are poor and hungry. Or indeed, if they are offered no other options for birth control.



T S SATYAN / CAMERA PRESS

5 Pro-natalism

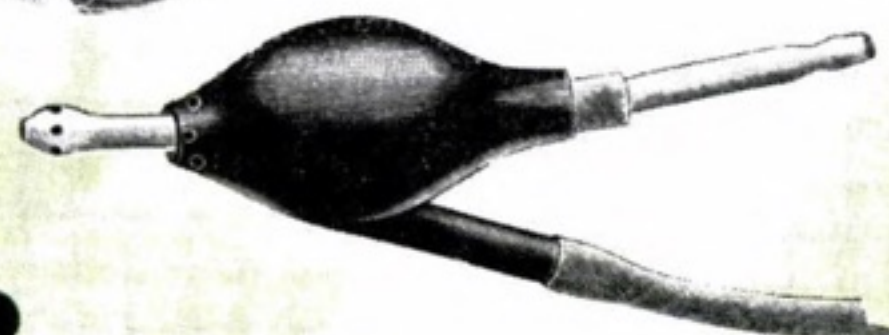
While mass sterilizations and campaigns to reduce births were going on in some places, elsewhere women were encouraged, even coerced, to have more children. In Britain in 1944 a panel of 'experts' were convinced that the decline in the birth rate was due to birth control and that it heralded the 'moral decline of the nation'.

Racial supremacy was also the issue in Europe and in the United States. In 1905 Theodore Roosevelt warned of the 'race suicide' of America's Anglo-Saxon Protestants if they did not increase their birth rate relative to Asian, Italian and Jewish immigrants.

Where Governments feel under threat – from immigration as in the US, or conflict, or during and after wars – they often advocate an increase in population, encouraging women to have large families (especially sons) and to stay at home and look after them. In fact, this rarely occasions real demographic change.

Several European countries have adopted incentives to encourage births; giving government subsidies to those with larger families. Pro-natalist thinking is also returning to the national agenda in the US, where it is linked with the anti-immigration movement.

Diaphragms and douches: early birth control (below and background image).



6 The Pill

In 1950 the American biologist Gregory Pincus was invited by the Planned Parenthood Federation in the US to develop an ideal contraceptive. Within a few years an oral birth control pill was being tested on 6,000 women – not Americans, but women from Puerto Rico and Haiti. In 1960, the first oral contraceptive (Enovid-10) was launched in the US market. The 'Pill' as it became known, heralded a revolution in birth control. Here at last, women were told, was a method that was both effective and safe. Women the world over embraced this new drug with enthusiasm. Within two years the Pill was being used by 1.2 million women and a decade later the numbers had risen to ten million.

Despite its popularity there were nagging worries about health risks. As early as 1961 studies showed that the Pill carried the risk of blood clots, heart attacks and strokes due to high levels of the hormone oestrogen. In 1962 there was evidence of at least 11 Pill-related deaths. Women activists in the US brought these dangers to public attention.

In the early 1970s a 'mini-Pill' with reduced oestrogen was finally introduced. But at least three manufacturing companies continued to produce high-dose Pills until 1988. Scientific debate about the health risks of oral contraceptives continues, although it is now accepted that the Pill is unsuitable for certain groups of women (see page 14).

7 The business of birth control

The dictates of the market play a major part in family planning and population control. About \$5 billion is spent each year on family planning in the Majority World; \$1 billion of this is donated by Northern governments, multilateral agencies and private organizations.

Pharmaceutical companies have global contraceptive sales of \$2.6 billion to \$2.9 billion per year. This huge economic power enables them to influence the policies of Southern governments and the priorities of the medical establishment. International aid donors, national governments and businesses collude in dictating who shall have children.

In Asia, for example, it is common for employers to offer incentives for using birth control and disincentives for having large families. In South Korea, one company provided housing and loans for employees using birth control. Maternity care was withheld after the birth of a third child and workers having large families were not promoted. Those with more than four children had to leave the firm. In the Philippines, workers were obligated to attend lectures on the 'need' for birth control.

Many private-sector population projects are funded by government aid dollars from the West. According to the UN, contraceptive use in the southern hemisphere has increased five-fold in the past quarter century because of the intervention of foreign-aid donors and international institutions.



Baby-making machine: a French pro-natalism poster from 1906

Sources: Betsy Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs* (South End Press 1995); Janet Hadley, *Abortion: Between Freedom and Necessity* (Virago 1996); Sonia Corrêa *Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South* (Zed Books 1994). Thanks to Sara Chamberlain for research.

ction, eption trol



Activism in the Philippines: lobbying for what is best for women.



8 The future

The history of women's reproductive health has been riddled with fear and force, ignorance and prejudice, and male control over women. It is easy to forget that women's bodies and lives are at the heart of the debate. And that Malthusian statistics represent the births and deaths of real flesh-and-blood people.

Reproductive issues cannot be addressed in isolation from the wider context of gender and social equality, and of equal access to healthcare, education and economic opportunity. A worldwide women's health movement now lobbies for what is best for women rather than just in the interests of limiting world population. Recent UN conferences have adopted some of the language and theories of this movement. In the meantime, women still have to negotiate their ways through the debates with information which is always complex and often unclear.

Anouk Ride reports
on the mixed messages
that teenagers are being
given about sex and

argues that young people have rights too.

Another planet

'YOU can't feel me up when I'm ten, then come back when I'm nineteen and tell me not to have sex with my boyfriend,' Maria shouts loudly down the phone over the street noise of Baguio City, the Philippines.¹ She is not alone in decrying the contradictory and condescending views that adults hold about young people and sex.

According to global surveys young people everywhere feel they are ruled by adults who tell them how to behave – but then refuse to give them control over their own bodies and their own sexuality.² Nor do they protect them from exploitation. While the media, religious leaders and governments decry the fact that kids are having sex and 'family values' are breaking down, they have failed to protect young people from the dangers of unwanted and unsafe sexual relations.

This is universal. In the Majority World early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation and prostitution deny young

men and women their own sexuality. In Africa, two million girls between seven and twelve are genitally mutilated and worldwide two million girls are introduced to the sex market each year.³

In Western countries kids are sent mixed messages by the media. They're told that early sexual initiation is bad, but are bombarded with images of teenagers as sexual toys. Who is cool in the fashion world? Models that are young and childlike. Fashion designer Calvin Klein recently popularized this image with ads depicting young women (such as British super-model Kate Moss) in provocative poses. Critics said this was an example of 1990s fashion excess – but Klein and most designers have used half-dressed, pouting teenagers to sell their clothes for years. Society sexualizes children – and then tells them sex is bad.

In many Western countries sexual abuse of children is rife. In the US victims below the age of ten account for 29 per cent of rape cases and 62 per cent of cases involve victims fifteen years old or less. And these are reported cases only.⁴ The overwhelming majority of abuse is by someone known to the victim. Often the very adults who are in positions of trust with young people – relatives, neighbours, parents – are those who destroy their self-esteem and disturb their sexual development.

Adults think young people need to be controlled. And society generally has the same view towards the poor, the uneducated and 'minorities' such as ethnic groups and homosexuals. So young people from these backgrounds have even more societal pressures on their sexual behaviour. In the West the highest rates of teenage pregnancy are found among girls living in poverty with low education levels or job prospects. In Britain, in a poor district of East London, one in ten teenage girls gets pregnant while in the wealthier boroughs of Kingston and Richmond the rate is less than half that.⁵ One in every ten births worldwide is to a teenage mother. Sometimes getting pregnant is the only way a teenager can boost

her self-esteem and add a sense of purpose to her life.

Society perpetuates the powerlessness of girls through poverty, class or caste and lack of education. Hari from Nepal describes a girl from her village: 'Mona was pregnant with her seventh child, having married a 17-year-old boy at the age of 14. Being of a low caste, with no education, she didn't have any control over her own life. If she had been given the opportunity of education to make her own money and an awareness of her body, she would not have become the slave of tradition and society.'²

Many girls marry for money or protection: 'I got married because of a super-painful childhood, because my father was always hitting me,' said one Chilean

Get real

Methods for contraception and prevention against STDs should be explained and discussed fully and in terms kids can understand by people they can relate to. Knowledge is not enough – they need support not judgement.

sex ed

Education of young people will only work if adults too learn about sex and young people's rights.

Sex, drugs – and rights for all!

Hanging out in Cape Town – society sexualizes young people and then tells them sex is bad.



ERIC MILLER / PANOS PICTURES

Cheer up

Sexuality is part of normal teenage development, not a monster to be locked away and starved. Young people need a chance to grow into their bodies, understand their reproductive systems and be responsible in their sexual relations. Sex is about relationships, personal discovery – and fun.

Boys too

Sex-education programs and services are not just for girls. Young men want to know sexual techniques, what to do to avoid pregnancy and information about STDs.

Right laws

Young people are entitled to contraception which is safe, legal, affordable and available. They have a right to be protected from disease.

Parts Are Private

Parents should not overrule youth rights. Abuse of young people must be condemned. Privacy and confidentiality of services is essential.

7-letter word

Respect. If older people respect teenagers, the feeling will be mutual.

A charter for young people's sexual rights.

girl.⁵ Early marriage means that girls have little power within the relationship so cannot control if and when they have children.

And having babies before their bodies are fully formed puts them at risk of a range of life-threatening illnesses – the most common cause of death in teenage girls around the world.³ Fistulae (a rupture between the bladder, rectum and vagina often caused by giving birth too young) is one horrific example. Girls are left infertile and incontinent and become social outcasts. Inadequate access to safe contraceptives means that in places like São Paulo, Brazil, the number of young girls admitted to hospitals due to complications from unsafe

abortions is greater than the number of births.

Even societies classified as democratic and liberal are far from accepting young people's sexuality, particularly when it is seen as not 'normal'. In Australia, where one of the best-selling, locally produced movies was *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and where Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is the nation's biggest street party, research indicates that around a third of young lesbians and gays have attempted suicide. The main cause of their depression was a common feeling that they lacked adult support.⁶

This is not surprising when some 'experts' are clearly living on another planet. One academic seriously proposed forced permanent contraception for ten- to seventeen-year-old girls worldwide. Meanwhile, Phyllis Schafly, an anti-feminist campaigner in the US, says: 'It's very healthy for a young girl to be deterred from promiscuity by fear of contracting a painful, incurable disease or cervical cancer or sterility or the likelihood of giving birth to a

dead, blind or brain-damaged baby.'⁷

People often believe that if young people are taught about sex this will promote immorality and recklessness. But sexual-abstinence programs, popular in the US, have never been effective in delaying the onset of intercourse. Research indicates that increased information about sex encourages a later start to sexual relations, higher use of contraceptives and fewer sexual partners.²

Kids are having sex despite adult disapproval. 'Heavy-handedness, brainwashing and moralizing will not stop the young from engaging in sexual activity,' says Elmira from Kazakhstan.² In fact, improvements in nutrition have led to girls worldwide becoming fertile more than two years earlier than previous generations. So most young people have a longer period of sexual relations before marriage than their parents. In sub-Saharan Africa eight out of ten people below the age of twenty are sexually experienced as are seven out of ten teenagers in many developed countries and at least half of all teens in Latin America.

Although they are sexually active, young people are ill-equipped to deal with the consequences of sex. Without access to information, contraception and equal rights they have high rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies. Half of all new HIV infections are among the 15 to 24 age group – predominantly in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. And one out of every twenty adolescents contracts an STD each year.

Almost all young people say that they need more information on all aspects of their sexual and reproductive health. More than three-quarters in a global youth survey were aware of the risks of STDs including HIV/AIDS. But a significant number of young people, particularly in Arab states and some parts of the Far East, believed STDs and AIDS were not a personal concern.

'STDs are only a problem for homosexuals, sex workers and drug addicts – it is scientifically proven,' said a young respondent reciting common knowledge in Yemen.² In India a study found most young people encountered sex earlier than in previous decades, but still thirty-six per cent of those interviewed had no idea what led to conception and only five per cent of them were using contraceptives.⁸ Up to 60 per cent of adolescent births throughout the world are unplanned.

Many youth workers say that teenagers, due to the lack of sex education and an inability to talk with parents, rely on the media and friends for advice. Most young people feel awkward talking to their elders about sex. In a recent survey of youth in 54 countries more than half said they felt too embarrassed to discuss sex with

adults.² 'Adults have got this ideology that young people are being rude if they express their thoughts, so sometimes I just feel like a stray, an alien,' says Sarah from Botswana.¹

But knowledge alone is not enough – young people, especially girls, need to feel empowered when it comes to sex.

One girl from Trinidad and Tobago says adamantly: 'If he does not have a condom, the woman should say: "If you don't have you can't get."'³ But in practice it is difficult – in Canada one survey found although 85 per cent of youth claimed to be very knowledgeable about contraception, only 11 per cent of female university students and 19 per cent of male students always used condoms, which were seen as 'uncool'.⁴ Girls and young women said they lacked the power to negotiate condom use and were subject to strongly held views about traditional male and female roles in sexual relationships.

Kids also need the law on their side. But often sex is illegal, with 15 or 16 being the average minimum age of consent. Shantal, a youth worker in Barbados, explains the dilemmas this can create: 'A mother wanted

to have the partner of her 13-year-old daughter arrested for statutory rape...The young girl said that she had not been raped and had willingly consented to sex. The young man, who was 21, was her boyfriend and she would never forgive her mother if she had him arrested. The case was eventually dropped because the girl refused to testify. Young people see themselves as sexual beings.'⁵

Young people are always going to have sex (or have it forced upon them). It is a denial of their rights to refuse them contraception and protection against STDs. What is needed when a 13-year-old goes to a clinic or to a doctor for contraception is clear information, support and counselling to ensure that the teenager is able to choose sexual relations and is confident of their control over the situation. It is a basic human right to have control over your own body. In fact, it may even be the one thing anyone can truly 'own' – so why deny this to people just because

they are young?

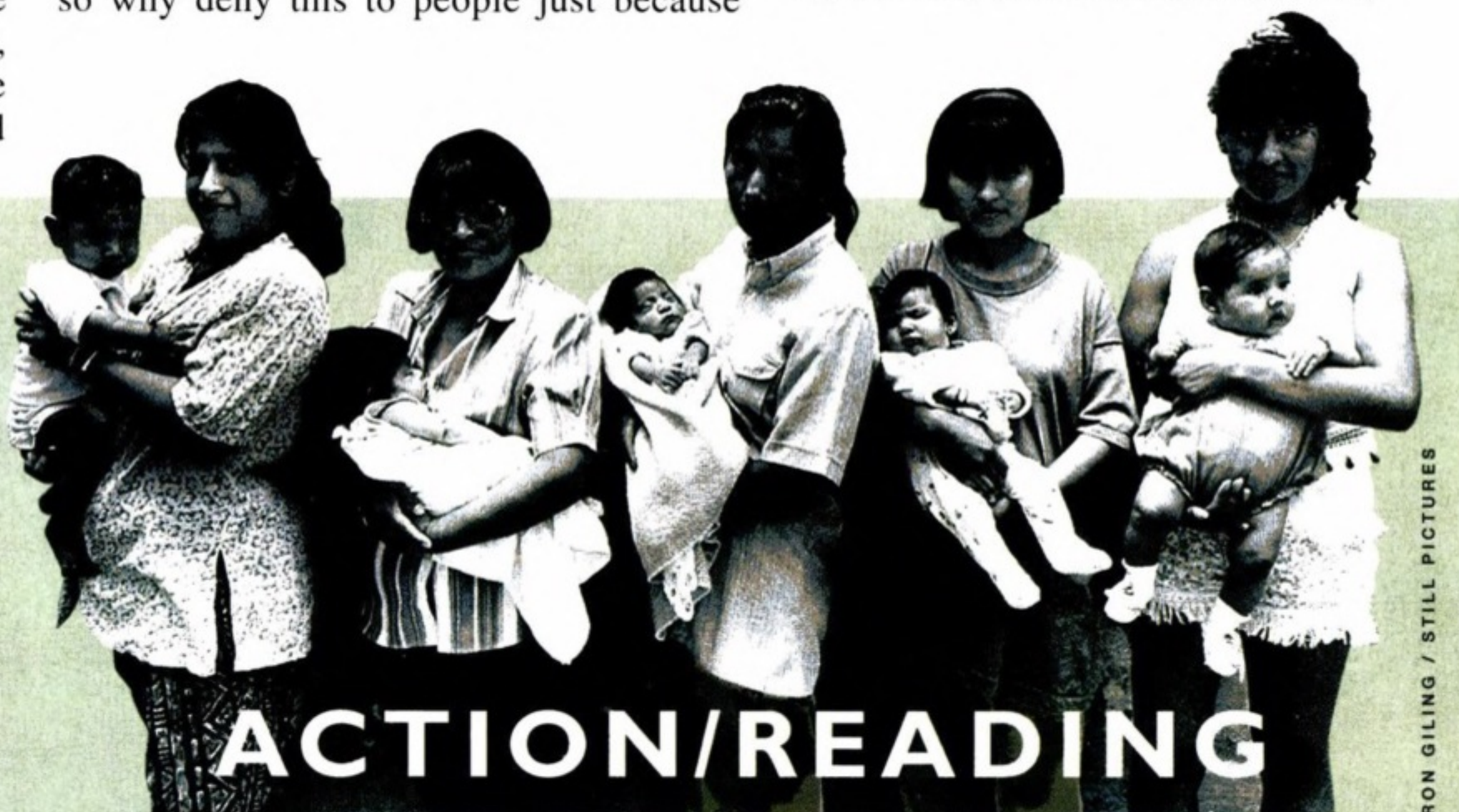
Young people have identified their needs in order to ensure they are informed, safe and empowered in their sexual relations. Before heading off to meet her friends in Baguio City, Maria offers a final opinion. 'I am tired of being told what to do. I would like older people to listen to my experiences and my questions,' she says confidently. 'But change will be impossible if adults do not learn from us.'⁶

¹ Interviews by Anouk Ride and International Planned Parenthood Foundation. Some of the names of people in this article have been changed. ² *Generation 97* (International Planned Parenthood Federation 1997). ³ *Rights of women in relation to sexuality and reproductive health* (Swedish Association for Sex Education 1997). ⁴ *Reproductive Health Matters*, November 1996. ⁵ *Reproductive Health Matters*, May 1995. ⁶ *Sexuality and Youth Suicide*, (Sexuality and Youth Suicide Project, Australia, 1997). ⁷ Janet Hadley, *Abortion: Between Freedom and Necessity* (Virago 1996). ⁸ *The Sex Files* (Family Planning Association of India/Sex Education, Counselling and Training 1996). ⁹ *Sex and Reproductive Health Rights in Canada* (website by Katherine McDonald <<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/canusa/papers/canada/english/reprod.html>)

Women's Health Movement

The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), 2nd Floor, Block F, Anjung Felda, Jalan Maktab, 54000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel: +603 292 9913; e-mail: women@arrow.po.my An information and resource centre focusing on women and development. Reproductive rights is one of its main areas. **Committee on Women, Population and the Environment (CWPE)**, c/o Population and Development Program, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 01002, US. Tel: +1 413 582 5506; e-mail: cwpe@igc.apc.org Provides alternative analyses of the relationships between population, poverty and environmental degradation, and challenges both population control and anti-abortion forces. **International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG)**, c/o Women's Studies, Hunter College, CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, US. Tel: +1 212 772 5682; e-mail: IRRRAG@igc.apc.org A grassroots research project on reproductive issues and women's rights, based in seven countries. The results are being published in *Negotiating Reproductive Rights: Women's Perspectives Across Countries and Cultures*, edited by Rosalind Petchesky and Karen Judd (Zed Books 1998). **International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)**, 24 East 21st St, New York, NY 10010, USA. Tel: +1 212 979 8500; e-mail: iwhc@igc.apc.org Supports projects and aid agencies aiming to promote high-quality women's reproductive health. **Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights**, NZ Voorburgwal 32, 1012 RZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 20 620 96 72; e-mail: wgnrr@antenna.nl An autonomous international network campaigning for the right of women to decide whether, when and with whom to have children.

Family planning/United Nations United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), 220 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10017, US. Fax: +1 212 557 6416 Website <http://www.unfpa.org> The main UN organization dealing with fertility issues. Publishes *The State of*



ACTION/READING

World Population report each year. **World Health Organization (WHO)**, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. Fax: +41 22 791 4870. Website: <http://www.who.ch> Produces the annual *World Health Report*. **International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)**, Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS, England. Tel: +44 171 487 7900; e-mail: ippfinfo@ippf.attmail.com The largest non-governmental family-planning organization.

Worth reading...

Abortion: Between Freedom and Necessity, Janet Hadley (Virago 1996). A well-argued case for abortion which also acknowledges the difficulties and dilemmas. 'Population and reproductive rights' *Focus on Gender*, Vol 2, No 2, June 1994 (Oxfam). A range of perspectives on reproduction in a Majority World context. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (Penguin 1996). A classic, recently updated. *Pandora's Clock: Understanding our Fertility*, Maureen Freely and Celia Pyper (Heinemann 1993). A humorous look at the ambiguities and emotions surrounding pregnancy and birth. *Private Decisions, Public Debates: Women, Reproduction and Population* (Panos Institute 1994) has a range of articles by journalists from the

Majority World. Panos (Tel: +44 171 278 1111; e-mail: panoslondon@gn.apc.org) also produces briefing papers on reproductive rights. *Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South*, Sonia Corrêa and Rebecca Reichmann, (Zed Books/Kali for Women/DAWN 1994). A critical Southern view of the debates around population, reproduction and development. *Reproductive Health Matters* is a quarterly journal with in-depth analysis and up-to-date news on women's health and rights. (29-35 Farringdon Rd, London EC1M 3JB, England. Tel: +44 171 242 8686; e-mail: 100663.3504@compuserve.com) *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control*, Betsy Hartmann (South End Press 1995). A detailed and searing analysis of the politics and history of population control which argues for a more woman-based perspective. *Where Women have no Doctor: A health guide for women*, A August Burns, Ronnie Lovich, Jane Maxwell, Katharine Shapiro (Hesperian Foundation 1997). A practical guide, useful for its down-to-earth explanations. *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, Asoka Bandarage (Zed Books, 1997). Places the population debate in a broad historical and social justice-oriented perspective. *The Legacy of Malthus* (forthcoming), Eric Ross (Zed Press 1998). A political economy critique of Malthusian theory and its applications in Europe and the South.

Father Javier Giraldo

Tania Cordoba spends some time with one of Colombia's most passionate defenders of human rights, a man for whom courage and determination are part of everyday life.

FATHER JAVIER GIRALDO seems vaguely distracted as he invites me to sit down. It's early morning and the sky is shot with streaks of pink. The Colombian priest is casually dressed but warm and welcoming. He's come to town to talk to local human-rights groups about the brutal repression in his country and to collect a prestigious award from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal.

The 54-year-old Jesuit is Executive Director of the Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP), an umbrella organization of more than 55 Catholic religious organizations in Colombia. The ICJP was started in 1988 when the Government of President Virgilio Barco launched a campaign of 'total war' against guerrilla insurgents, exterminating thousands of innocent civilians in the process. According to Father Giraldo the ICJP was set up to document and disseminate information on human-rights abuses in Colombia, to act in solidarity with the victims and to expose serious violations to the international community.

Father Giraldo is a small, clean-shaven man with thinning hair and sparkling, energetic eyes. He begins by sketching the background to the human-rights concerns in his country. 'Political violence,' he says bluntly, 'has claimed more lives in Colombia in recent years than any other country in the world. The international media focuses mainly on drug trafficking, but that is not the real story.'

Over the past decade the ICJP has documented the violent deaths of nearly 20,000 people who have been murdered for their political beliefs. An average of ten people every day have been killed in the violence. Among those most targeted are community workers, trade unionists, indigenous leaders and human-rights advocates. In May 1997 two of Father Giraldo's colleagues, Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado, were assassinated in their home by five members of a right-wing paramilitary gang.

For a man who has witnessed so much death Father Giraldo is both optimistic and remarkably calm. His relentless defence of human rights shapes his attitude to life and is anchored deep in his faith.

'For me defending human values is not an option.' He shrugs and spreads his hands palms up, as if to underline his words. 'It's an obligation that I have willingly placed on myself.' Father Giraldo refuses to accept state-supplied bodyguards even though he has had dozens of threats on his life. He continues to travel the same daily route to his office and will not be cowed or intimidated.

I ask him if he does not fear for his own life and he pauses for a moment. 'I have no choice but to denounce human-rights abuses, even if my life is threatened. The sacrifice of one's own life is implicit if one wants to do something for the people.'

Father Giraldo glances up occasionally as he speaks, slowly articulating his thoughts in careful English. 'Colombia has experienced torture on a large scale since the 1970s and forced disappearances since the 1980s.' The military has targeted Colombia's left-wing *guerrilla* movement as the country's biggest threat. Father Giraldo does not condone the guerrillas but stresses the need to understand the link between injustice and poverty and the development of the guerrilla movement.

'If you look at who joins the guerrillas,' he says, 'you will find it

is young people who have experienced misery and injustice throughout their lives. To deny the relationship of injustice and the guerrilla movement in Colombia is to close your eyes to reality.'

The country also saw a huge boom in cocaine trafficking in the 1980s. The number of violent deaths exploded as economic pressures forced thousands of peasants to grow coca to sustain themselves. Inevitably, the illegal business also spawned its own violent web of paid assassins and private armies defending territory and markets. In some ways the drug wars have provided the Government and the

right-wing death squads with a smoke-screen, allowing the state to wage a war on any social organizations interested in alternatives to the present system.

In the province of Meta, for example, all members of the leftist Patriotic Union (a legal political party in Colombia), including leaders, parliamentarians and unionists, have been assassinated.

Father Giraldo pauses again, searching for the right words. 'It's a question of fear,' he says quietly. 'The threat of violence creates fear and that is manipulated to maintain the status quo and to retain control of the general population. The result is that both life and the dignity of being human are not respected in Colombia.'

Father Giraldo believes that a fully human society is one without inequalities and without starvation. But he says the changing nature of the global economy is also subverting the idea and the goal of equality. 'We have come to accommodate ourselves to a model of society that has to be unjust, with inherent inequalities, where a great percentage of the population has to be in misery, has to die of hunger, has to live with their basic needs unsatisfied. This is the neo-liberal mentality and every day it seems more normal.'

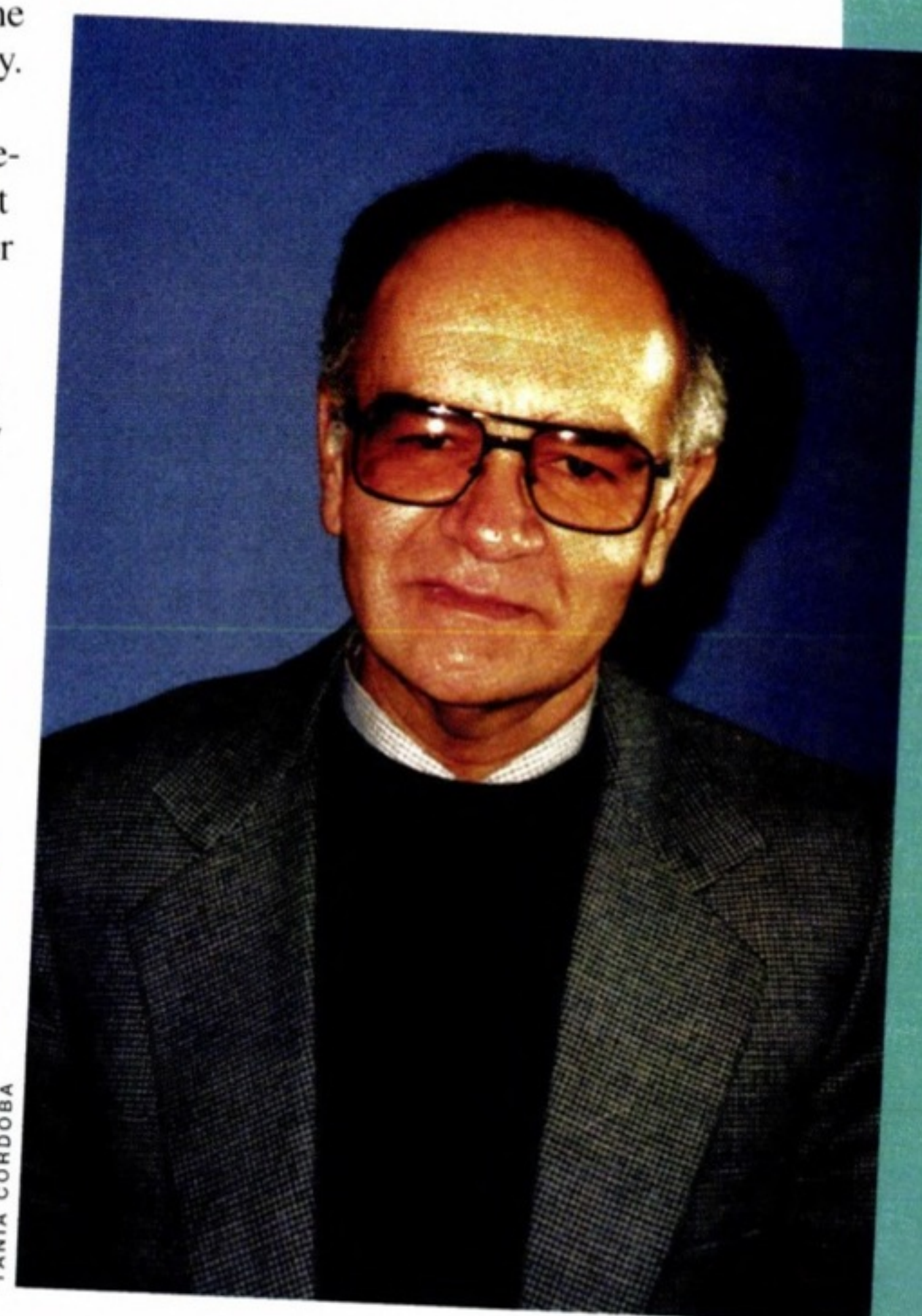
I ask Father Giraldo about the possibility of reversing the neo-liberal tide and he tells me the first step is to overcome the idea that there is only one possible model for society.

'My colleagues and I do this by denouncing the barbarities in Colombian society to the international community.

With the little that we have we construct something positive or at least try to plant the seeds for a future with justice. We must confront the ideologies that threaten that future. How? By organizing communities to defend themselves, by keeping communications open and by maintaining an active conscience. Those are the seeds we need to help plant.' ■

Tania Cordoba is an intern in the **NI** Toronto office.

For further information contact **ICCHRLA**, 129 St Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M4V 1N5. Tel: +1 416 921 0801; Fax: +1 416 921 3943. e-mail: icchrla@web.net



TANIA CORDOBA

Reviews



music

Stayin' Home with the Blues

by Various (Spectrum/Polygram 537 945 1552 887 1554157 CD)

African Blues

by Various (World Music Network RNET 1019CD/1019CMC)

Blues? That's American Deep South stuff, right? Well, not only. The quest for 'authenticity' in music has taken so many spurious turns in recent years that it has perhaps managed to overlook the overarching patterns. It's these patterns that have made up the blues, that inimitable form of misery set to music that's as vibrant today as ever. It has a long history – musicologists have traced the origins of blues from India to Arabia to Spain, through to Africa, the Caribbean and America's southern states.

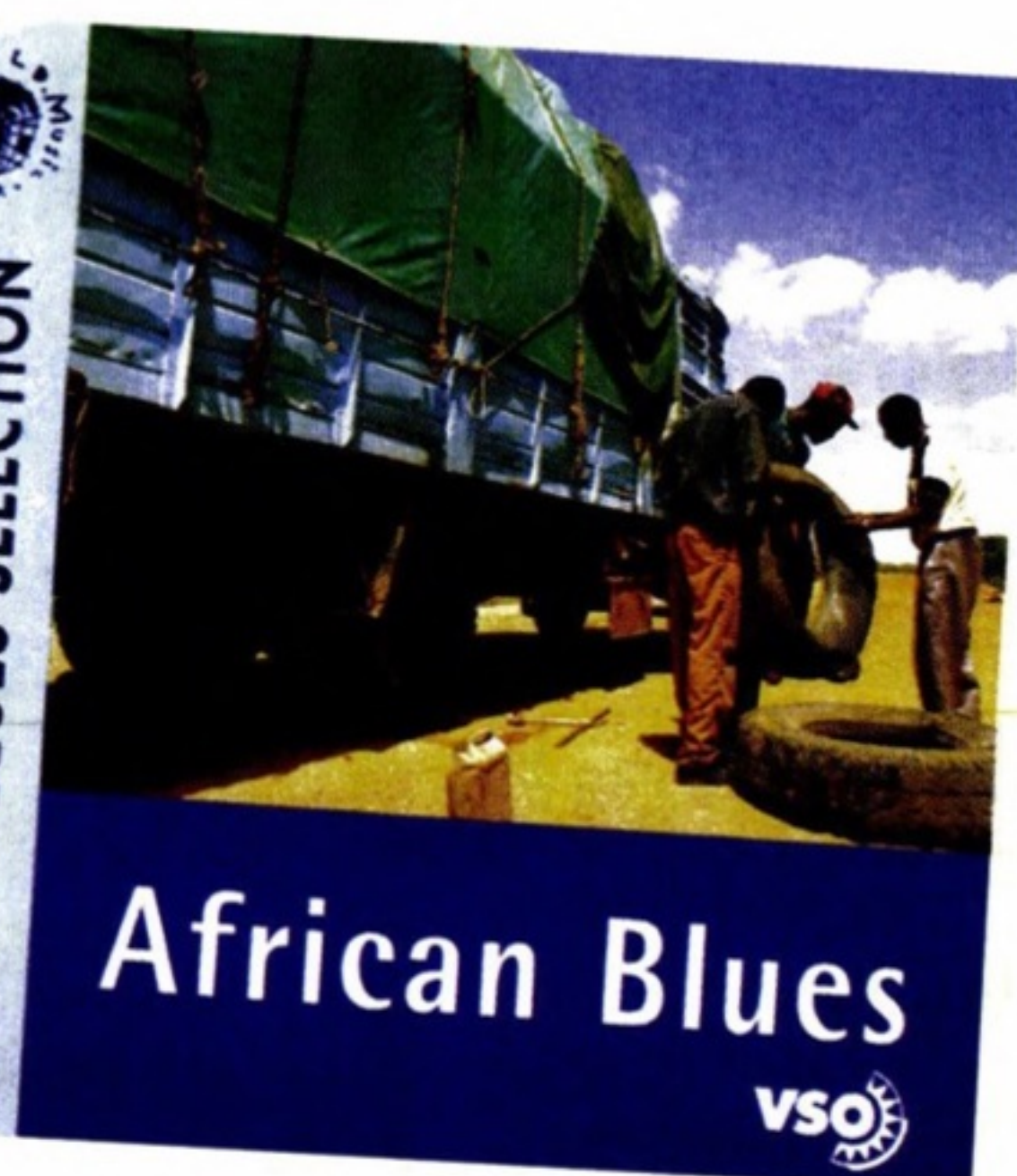
African Blues, a valuable and exhilarating record, contains 15 songs ranging from Egypt's Hamza El Din to Cape Verde's unsurpassable Cesaria Evora. **The Stayin' Home With the Blues** series, meanwhile, features vintage recordings with American

blues artists such as Freddie King, Big Bill Bronzy, Lightnin' Hopkins and Memphis Slim.

Although blues has its origins elsewhere, it's the American records, made mostly in the 1940s and 1950s, that sound spare and dour. It's impossible to say the same of African musician Ismael Lo's 'Talibe' with its sweetly sad vocals and lilting rhythms, or the mesmerizing progression of Oumou Sangare's 'Saa Magni'. But listen more closely and the connections become clearer: there's something of Otis Redding about Kanté Manfila and Balla Kall's 'Kankan Blues' from Guinea, and there's a distinct doo-wop groove in the oldest track on the disc, Zambian Alick Nhata's 'Maggie'.

Turn to Lightnin' Hopkins' 'Sad news from Korea' – a 1950s song which shows how well the old blues format adapts to accommodate new subjects – and we begin to hear the same kinds of empty spaces, quivering with expression, as in songs like 'A Va Safy Va Lomo' from Mozambique's Orchestra Marrabenta Star.

Blues has its sound roots in the music that the American slaves brought from Africa and its emotional roots in the experience of captivity. And **African Blues** is fascinating because it traces not only roots, but is made by musicians who have already been exposed to American Blues, especially



in its soul and R'n'B incarnations.

But how authentic is that typical no-good-woman blues sentiment that the **Stayin' Home** album has in abundance? Without knowing the languages it's difficult to know whether misogyny prevails in **African Blues**. But it is intriguing to reflect on Cesaria Evora, the barefoot diva who slugs back whisky and smokes with the best of them, and who has by virtue of her Portuguese-language songs been enlisted into the ranks of *fado* – Portuguese blues – singers. Whatever the roots of blues, its routes through the world continue apace.

Politics ★★☆☆

Entertainment ★★★★★

(African Blues)

Politics ★★

Entertainment ★★☆☆

(Stayin' Home with the Blues)

LG



books

School Days and Strange Words

by Patrick Chamoiseau

both translated by Linda Coverdale (Granta Books, London, ISBN 1-86207-163-2 and ISBN 1-86207-086-5)

Reading these two books by Martinican author Patrick Chamoiseau is like entering a forest of tongues – sentences dart out unexpectedly like lizards, words open up like jungle flowers. Language and its shaping of identity is a major theme in both books, but Chamoiseau's methods are refreshingly direct and thankfully devoid of post-modern clever-me posturing.

School Days is at once a memoir, an essay and a fable, folding the merits of all three genres into writing of such dexterity and lightness that the pages fly by. Telling the story of a little black boy – the young Chamoiseau – and his thirst to enter the world of reading and writing in a breathless sequence of episodes, it reveals the sad and absurd attempts of his teacher to colonize his mind.

The Teacher is a splendid creation, a

Creole man with a Frenchified mind and a mouthful of rolling R's, on a mission to stub out the patois spoken by his charges by means of caning and ridicule. His attempts to draw the children into a world where snow falls and apples grow and boys are called Petit-Pierre, a world which has no relation whatsoever to the realities of their lives, are based upon his notions of 'civilization'. In the Teacher's mind the Universal Order is 'simple and just' and marked by 'ineluctable progress'. To be part of it one must speak its language, French. As for

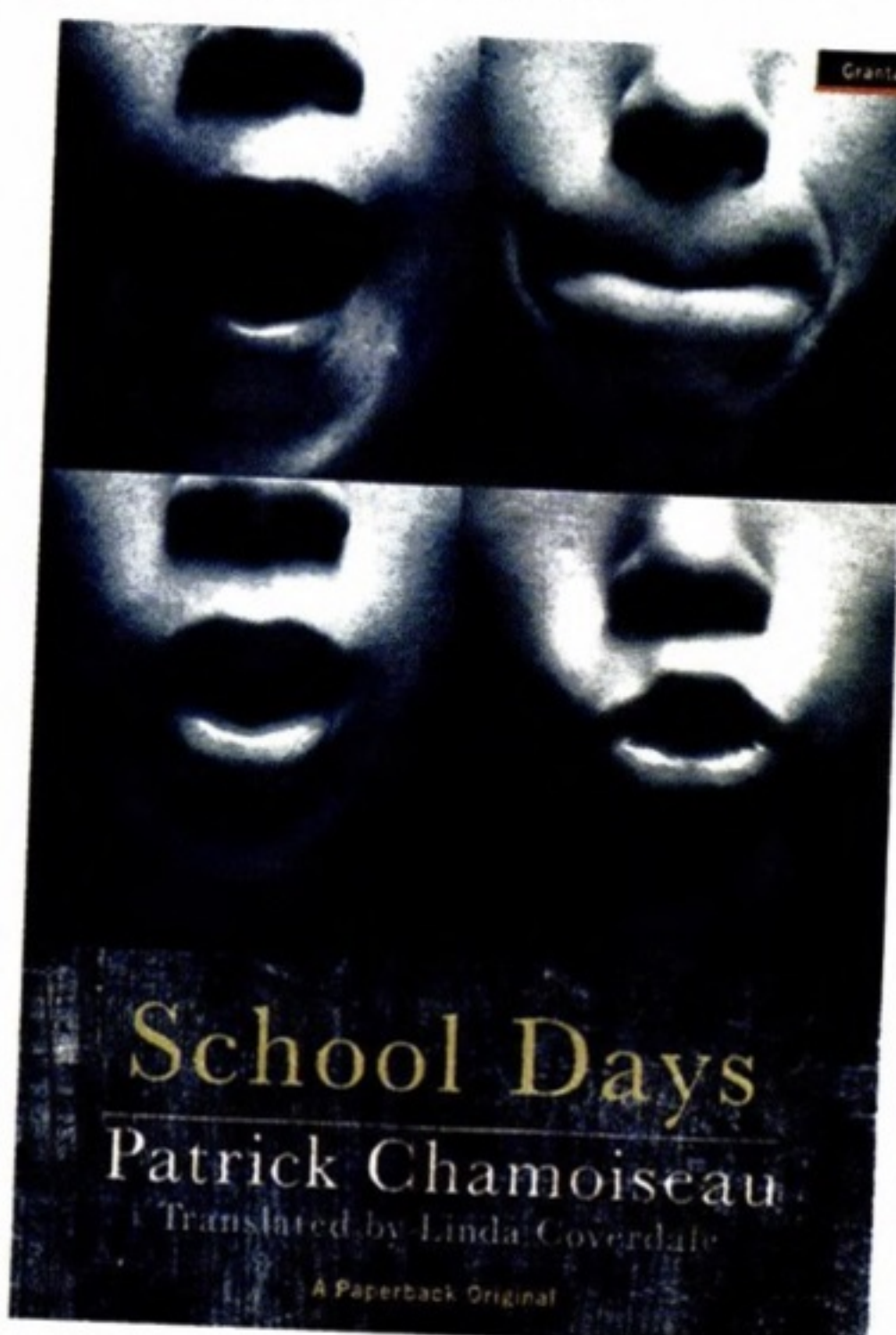
Creole – 'This po'-nigger talk gums up your minds with its worthless pap!'

Contrasting the vibrancy of the boy's life at home with the dead hours of regimentation at school, and the fumbling attempts of the children to speak French with the verve of their mother tongue (including gorgeous swear words like Smelly-sore-flies or Lowdown-dutty-stinks), the book avoids falling into maudlin chest-beating. Chamoiseau is fair to his characters. A replacement teacher steeped in the ideals of *Negritude* may belong to the opposition but the children still find he cramps and conforms them in the same way. Likewise if one of the children loses all his fighting spirit to this assault of Frenchness, the protagonist is eventually inspired by the Teacher's love of language if not by the language itself. For all the familiarity of its themes, **School Days** is a remarkable, fresh little book.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

Strange Words is even more fun. Chamoiseau retells the spiky, scary Creole folk tales of his childhood with palpable delight. He is well served by his translator Linda Coverdale who hardly puts a foot wrong in both books. Gauging the politics of the tales is not easy. There are the usual stock-in-trade of wicked hags, beautiful young people destined for matrimony and noble 'cripples', and Chamoiseau certainly makes no attempt to



Burma Diary

...a personal focus on a national trauma.

'improve' them for contemporary tastes. That would mean being untrue to the tradition he is seeking to bring to a larger audience. Also it's not unreasonable to expect a contemporary audience to engage with the issues raised by the presence of these stereotypes. One of the storyteller's tactics that Chamoiseau employs is a certain opacity – things are told without necessarily being explained, inviting the active interpretation of the reader. Another tactic is humour which can deflate straight readings of events. In one tale a she-devil is described with such zest as to make her a comic-heroic creation – 'yes indeed, it was she, the chamber-pot crony of more than one old zombi, the Bat King's bedfellow in the buff, practically chief undercook in hell's kitchen, yes, her!'

At another level the stories' politics are quite clear – they are tales of survival from a colonized land, with hunger and starvation looming large. Power is defeated by guile and cunning, though, as Chamoiseau points out in his introduction, the 'remedies for misfortune are not collective ones'. These are wild, wickedly playful stories, hissing and sparkling in an orbit all their own – and completely irresistible.

Politics ★★
Entertainment ★★★★★ DG

The Black Handbook

by **EL Bute** and **HJP Harmer**
(Cassell ISBN 0 304 33543 6)

Ever wondered what the Cha Cha Cha Campaign was? **The Black Handbook** has the answer to this and plenty more besides. It's an immensely readable reference covering the people, the history and the politics of Africa and the African Diaspora over three continents and several centuries. Apart from the more obvious stuff – country profiles, political leaders, dates of independence and so forth – there's a fascinating section on terms, movements and ideas. All in all, an authoritative delight to dip into.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★
Very good ★★★★★
Good ★★★★★
Fair ★★★★★
Poor ★★★★★

JEANNE Hallacy does not apologize for stepping across the line of straight journalism into the realm of personal storytelling in her documentary **Burma Diary**. It's been a five-year labour of love for the director who began filming in 1992 without financial backing.

Following a five-year stint as a journalist in the Philippines covering stories on youth involved in the New People's Army guerrilla movement, Hallacy turned her attention to Burma and the role of young people in that struggle.

But as it turned out, **Burma Diary** became not just a story about children in the resistance, but a window on the lives of 'revolutionary' families. Such families live outside the norms, in fear and uncertainty.

The North American film-maker's friendship with Tint Aung, a member of the All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF) who escaped into the jungle following the 1988 student demonstrations, led her to develop the final script for the documentary around him. The story of Tint Aung, his partner ABSDF nurse San San Myint, and their twin daughters was a story people could not fail to relate to. But the film is also about Hallacy's own odyssey into the Burmese trauma, making several trips into the country to film as well as working in the jungle border areas.

The impact of the Burmese military regime on lives, both inside and outside Burma, is powerfully portrayed through the documentation of Tint Aung's life and the difficult and complex decisions with which he is faced every day. A recurring theme is personal and collective pain generated by fear and uncertainty: the Burmese have been traumatized by family separation and cling to the dream of the day they can be reunited in their homes in Burma.

Like most Burmese, Tint Aung and San San Myint are generally reserved about displaying painful emotions. To get extremely emotional, Hallacy notes, is seen as an indulgence that cannot be afforded. But on the eve of the couple's departure from the

Thai-Burma border to exile in Australia the reserve fell away. 'The camera is always such an incredible buffer but in that moment it was gone,' Hallacy recalls. 'There was no camera, it was just San San Myint and me weeping for all of the things that were never going to be said.'

Burma Diary could be criticized for giving the impression that the solution for people involved in the Burmese struggle for democracy is to leave and rebuild their lives elsewhere. This is not the intention of the film, nor what its protagonists believe. 'The film is about the complexity of decisions and the transformation towards seeing that there are a multitude of ways to fight, not only with a gun,' Hallacy emphasizes. Today Tint Aung is a tireless worker and activist in the ABSDF's information department in Sydney.

It's now ten years since the SLORC military regime's bloody suppression of student demonstrations that shocked the world in 1988. This documentary seeks to remind us that the Burmese people's struggle is not over. But the film ends with a message framed by Buddhist concepts of compassion and non-violence – a position exemplified by Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the Burmese democratic movement.

Chilean film-maker Miguel Littin, who risked his neck to travel clandestinely through his native land documenting the oppression of Pinochet's dictatorship, once said: 'Nobody is the product of individual effort but rather we are the sons and daughters of a time and a history, conscious or unconscious instruments of the people.'

This belief is at the core of **Burma Diary**, a penetrating piece of political and social history which calls on us to be 'wide awake' and to keep our hearts and minds open to all of humanity.

by **Catherine Hesse-Swain**

Burma Diary by **Jeanne Hallacy** is available through Jane Balfour Films, London, England. Tel: +44 171 267 5392. Fax: +44 171 267 4241. e-mail: janebalfourfilms@compuserve.com



PHOTO: JEANNE HALLACY

Reviews



film

Men with Guns

directed by John Sayles

From *The Anarchist's Convention* to *Lone Star*, John Sayles has adroitly played the themes of contemporary allegory. His new film, set somewhere in the Americas, south of Texas, continues in that vein.

Men with Guns could take place in Chiapas, Mexico, or perhaps in Guatemala. Maybe it's even further south – any place where the armies and rightist death squads target Indian communities and those doctors and social workers who work 'in the field'. But Sayles is careful to show that his story is not specific to one time or place. 'I didn't want people to say that could only happen in El Salvador... or Mexico,' he says.

Doctor Fuentes is a wealthy, distinguished professional, proud of his achievements in the Alliance For Progress. Many years earlier he had inspired young medical students to fan out into the jungle in order to practise within Native communities. Then one day he stumbles across one of his former students, now

selling drugs in Los Perdidos, a slum near the city dump, and Fuentes begins his descent from ivory tower ignorance into the bitter and tragic world beyond the capital city.

The story of a well-off liberal, confronted by the nasty realities of civil war is hardly new. And the way in which the film unfolds as Dr Fuentes searches for his students in the jungle carries an air of inevitable fate. Yet Sayles' use of allegory and stylization turns the familiar plot into a political statement. The doctor's search centres on one remaining secret Indian village – is it Shangri-la or the sad remnants of a few fleeing refugees?

Unlike most US filmmakers whose work gets wide distribution, Sayles laces his films with a solid left-wing sensibility. But it's understated and hard to pin down. You can sense a filmmaker steeped in popular Hollywood formulas but who can play its themes and variations to make political points.

The international cast led by the celebrated Argentine Federico Luppi, as Dr Fuentes, and Dan Rivera Gonzalez, as his ten-year-old companion, is superb. The boy swerves between youthful energy and a nearly dead emotional life. His matter-of-fact descriptions of massacre, torture, and the men with guns



that he has witnessed, carries us into the bleak emotional centre of the film.

In many scenes Sayles creates a visual claustrophobia, occasionally punctuated by sweeping vistas from the high mountains. One brief sequence takes place in the dark and overgrown ruins of Palenque, Mexico. Viewers will be reminded of the 'magic realism' so closely linked to South American fiction. But Sayles seems to be saying, 'I know it's a familiar story, of a liberal voyage of discovery, and a repressive army murdering Indians, told in a style that treads close to Latin American clichés. But it's still true. It happened before; it could happen again.'

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

PS

Reviewers: **Louise Gray, Dinyar Godrej, Peter Steven**

Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The NI Crossword

No. 23 by Axe

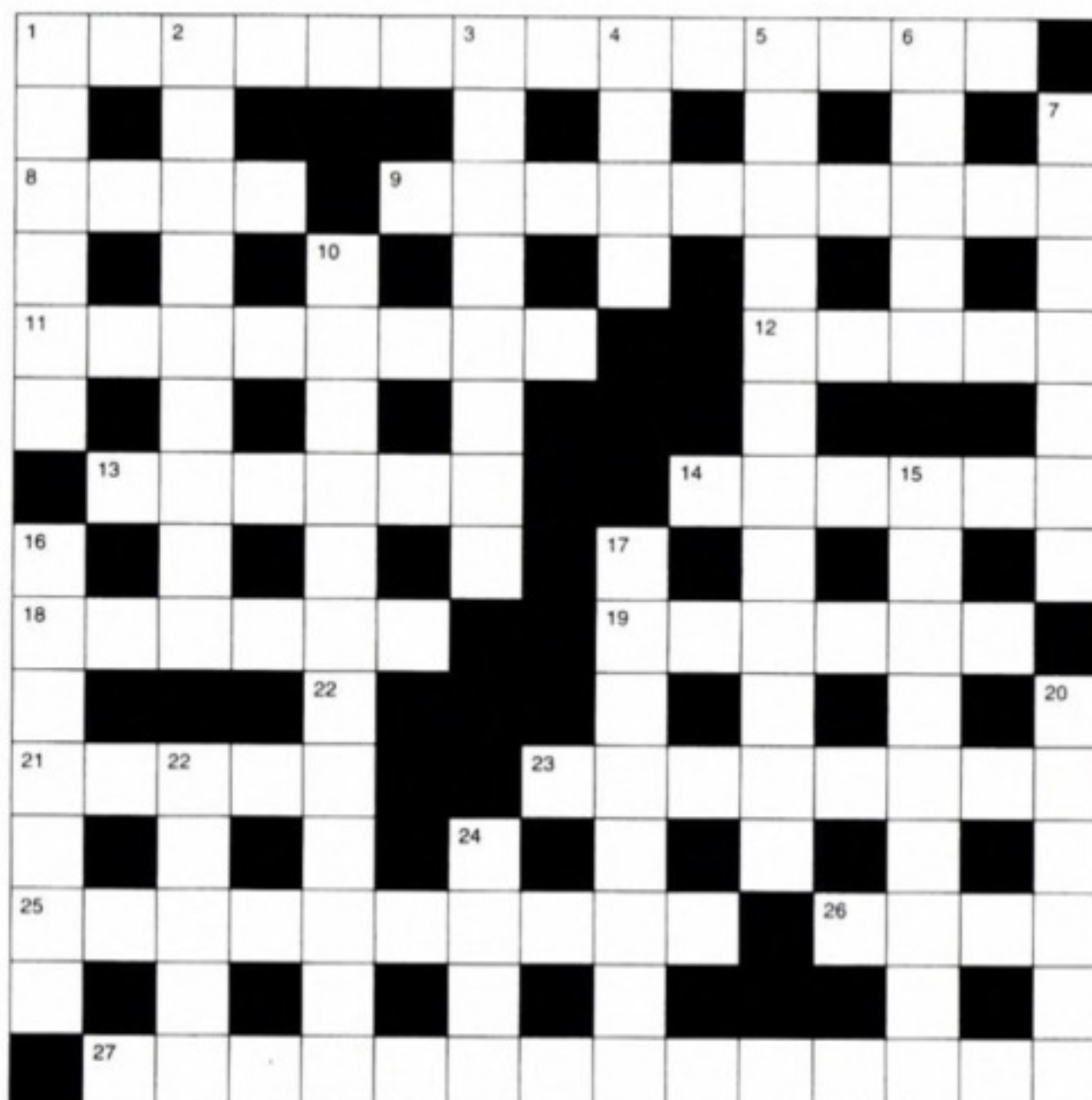
CRYPTIC

Across

- 1 Charitable brothers who are denied access to 10 (7,2,5)
- 8 Erik heard music to die for (4)
- 9 Dock and rout sailor leaders (10)
- 11 Member of 10 to contest, we hear, first seat with another (8)
- 12 Revolutionary, also known as secret, police (5)
- 13 Starburst, America – place Paul called home (6)
- 14 Instinctive creature? (6)
- 18 Gold, for example, nearly all worked out by California neighbour (6)
- 19 Beef course needing strong Common Market directive – ingredients deleted in exchange of stock (6)
- 21 A kilt curiously found at Mayan site (5)
- 23 Attic for one article after screwing up 6 (8)
- 25 Trio deafen congregation – some combo! (10)
- 26 Excuse one deserting to French town (4)
- 27 Pow-wows not an exclamation to shorten the term for detainees (9,2,3)

Down

- 1 Balkan trouble spot – Greek island ring to join the other side shortly (6)
- 2 Not willing to exit right from the highway between 18 and California? (9)
- 3 African girl embraces Scandinavians (8)
- 4 Powerful Basque and 23 delicacy (4)
- 5 Bogey vehicle may be 3, but denied access to 10... (7,5)
- 6 ...but the order 'neath earl maybe! (5)
- 7 Back the Spanish affirmation that post goes to one Muslim (7)
- 10 Uncommon lodgings? (5,2,5)
- 15 Exodus reveals composite code (6,3)
- 16 Papa makes point very loudly (7)
- 17 Aorta bit out in 14 hell (8)
- 20 Sounds like sleepy head turned around and discovered older outcrop (6)
- 22 Capital letters in Senegal spell puppet in Hungary (5)
- 24 Take note back to school (4)



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QUICK

Across

- 1 Crusades hospitaliers of Jerusalem from 1530 to 1798 (7,2,5)
- 8 Ritual immolation by burning (4)
- 9 Airings of media leader's personal opinions (10)
- 11 Order of nobility next below an earl (8)
- 12 Bolshevik secret police, 1917-22 (5)
- 13 Original home of Paul the Apostle, in modern-day Turkey (6)
- 14 Organism having life, sensation and voluntary motion (6)
- 18 33rd state of the American union, 1859 (6)
- 19 The Paris Stock Exchange – or any business exchange in Europe (6)
- 21 Mayan city of Guatemala which flourished between 300 and 800 AD (5)
- 23 Relating to Attic Greek (8)
- 25 The act of uniting in a league – often of peoples or nations (10)
- 26 French birthplace of Toulouse-Lautrec, on the River Tam (4)
- 27 Subject of the Geneva Conventions of 1906, 1929 and 1949 (9,2,3)

Down

- 1 Region of former Yugoslavia with a majority Albanian population (6)
- 2 Dying without leaving a will (9)
- 3 Citizen of the country with the largest area in Africa (8)
- 4 Greek cheese (4)
- 5 The picture which gave Humphrey Bogart his only Oscar in 1951 (7,5)
- 6 Noble – often the chief of a Scottish clan (5)
- 7 Sub-group of Shi'ism with the Aga Khan as its head (7)
- 10 Britain's Upper House (5,2,5)
- 15 The Ten Commandments, for example (6,3)
- 16 The Vicar of Rome (7)
- 17 Place of slaughter (8)
- 20 In geology, an outcrop (through erosion) of older rocks amongst newer (6)
- 22 First Secretary of Hungary following the 1956 uprising (5)
- 24 English school, established in 1440 (4)

Dirty peace

Torture is the latest field to be privatized in Argentina. **Amaranta Wright** reports on the continuing aftermath of a dictatorship's 'Dirty War'.

WHEN Argentina's military dictatorship fell 14 years ago, the kidnapers, torturers and contract killers nervously crept back into society and prepared themselves for hard times. They may have received official pardons for the 30,000 people they helped to 'disappear' in the Dirty War against 'left-wing subversives'. But the fear must still have hung over them that one day there would be a settling of accounts in the new democracy.

They need not have worried. Despite efforts to exclude them from public life, the men who carried out one of the worst atrocities in the history of Argentina have found a lucrative niche.

Noticias, Argentina's leading serious news weekly, revealed in a recent investigation that successful security firms are now being run by men who were once key figures in the Navy's 'intelligence unit'. The Navy was the dictatorship's most brutal arm: hundreds of live prisoners were thrown from its helicopters and planes.

The liberalized economy of Argentina has produced, as elsewhere, extremes of wealth and poverty accompanied by a growth in crime.

'The unstable climate has given these dictatorship strongmen the perfect opportunity to privatize their experience,' says Maria Caeati of the human-rights research group CELS. 'Security firms use ex-torturers because they have the experience to execute their tasks with more rigor and conviction than anyone.'

'Repressors have been able to set up companies and monopolize the market with all the money they made during the dictatorship,' says Laura Bonaparte, spokesperson for the Families of the Disappeared Commission. The organization estimates that \$70 million was made from selling the property – and even the children – of the people they killed.

Former Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo first highlighted the issue in 1995 when he accused the country's leading entrepreneur, Alfredo Yabran, of hiring three ex-Navy intelligence officers as security chiefs for his murky business empire, which includes Argentina's private postal service.

Roberto Naya, a graduate of the Navy School (ESMA), worked for Alfredo Yabran's conglomerate and made it one of the biggest clients for the services offered by two of his former colleagues. Victor Dinamarca, who co-ordinated 42 torture centres in ESMA, and Adolfo Donda Tigel, who has also been identified as a leading torturer, now operate companies providing a wide range of security services.

All three have denied their violent past and their links with each other. But some of their contract workers – lesser-ranked torturers – show no sign of discretion and talk proudly of their accomplishments.

'I don't regret torturing and killing,' says Julian 'The Turk' Simon, a big, bushy man who transports valuables for one of the security companies (which he refused to name). 'If I was given a cause I believed in I would torture again. It is my profession. That is where my experience lies.'

'The Turk' is known in human-rights circles as having been one of the country's cruellest interrogators. He has been identified in 58 cases of torture at ESMA, but is suspected of many more. After the dictatorship he went into hiding. Today he sits in a grungy bar every morning, waiting for bloody errands that no-one

*'If I was given
a cause I believed in
I would torture again.
That is where my
experience lies.'*



Mothers of the Disappeared: today their children's killers are running security services.

else will do. If you calm his nerves and can be patient for long enough he will tell you how he tortured with electric shocks.

'I am not a dangerous man to normal people,' he says. 'I don't kill without a contract. But there are still too many leftist influences, too many intellectuals and too much scum in the country. If someone told me to take them out, I'd do it.'

Simon laments the fact that his principles make him too much of a liability for the company to employ him directly. He makes extra money in his spare time, selling candies and firearms.

But he is grateful that his former colleagues give him work from time to time. They do so out of nostalgia, he says.

Even if human-rights groups could expose the links between former torturers, because of the pardon there would be little they could do about it. While the thought of killers mingling with citizens on the streets of Buenos Aires terrifies many, it doesn't seem to bother others who live in the rich security-guarded suburbs and private villages.

Martin Forrester knows the military past of the gatekeeper who greets him every day as he leaves his house in the plush suburb of San Isidro. 'We laugh with him because he keeps telling us there'll be a coup next month. He's crazy... But he keeps the robbers out. That's the main thing,' says Forrester.

However, men like 'The Turk', who seem to cherish their experience as torturers, are slowly giving up on Argentina. There are other campaigns to be fought in other parts of the world where their profession can be put to better – and more lucrative – use.

'I want to be employed for what I'm good at, in a cause where I'm appreciated,' says Simon. 'The war against narco-traffickers is the next one to be won. If any foreign institution requires my expertise, I'll be here, ready.'

Amaranta Wright is a freelance journalist based in Buenos Aires.

Country profile Kazakhstan

THE emptiness of Kazakhstan's vast territory is deceptive. Set in the heart of Central Asia, a myriad of complexities are interwoven with its past and present.

By far the largest of the five former Soviet Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan is the least densely populated. Kazaks as an ethnic group constitute a minority in their own country, the only Central Asian republic where this is the case.

Kazakhstan's fledgling democracy is dominated by the powerful figure of President Nazarbaev. He first took the post in 1990. In 1995 he dissolved Parliament and held a referendum in which he claimed a 95-per-cent endorsement for the extension of his presidency until the year 2000.

He heads a territory stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the south-east. This vast expanse of grassy steppe was home to the nomadic, horse-riding peoples who eventually emerged in the fifteenth century as the Kazaks. They used a Turkic language and adopted Islam, but since they were nomads they left few buildings or monuments behind. The traditional Kazak lifestyle is not much in evidence today, except as a tourist attraction. During the



terrifying regime of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, those who refused to join agricultural collectives or live in cities were persecuted and sent to labour camps. Famine soon followed. Hundreds of thousands died. Many Kazaks fled to neighbouring China and the population plunged by more than two million from 1926 to 1933.

The Kazaks divide themselves according to geography into what they call 'Hordes'. These internal divisions include the Great Horde which is mostly in the south, the Middle Horde in the centre and the Little Horde in the east. President Nazarbaev's

allegiance is to the Great Horde but he has taken steps to redress the exclusion from power of the Middle and Little Hordes.

Shifting the capital from Almaty in the South – which is Great Horde territory – to Aqmola in the North is an attempt to placate the Middle Horde. The transfer took place at the end of 1997 and Parliament held its first session there in January 1998. But the new capital is not popular. Almaty has the largest concentration of people, industries and tourism, while the infrastructure of Aqmola has yet to be properly

developed. The President is frequently sighted in his old haunts and enjoys skiing at Chymbulak, a playground for the affluent.

Since independence Kazakhstan has been exploiting its rich natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Foreign companies have sent in staff and deals have also been brokered with neighbouring China. The influx has made Almaty the second-most-expensive city in the world after Tokyo.

Frequent power cuts in the cities add to anxiety about the country's development. Unemployment is rising and organized crime is spreading – wide gaps in wealth between foreigners and local people are obvious.

Meanwhile, the Government tries to nurture a sense of national identity. This has led to less tolerance of non-Kazaks, particularly Russians and Slavs. Kazak will be written in Roman script rather than Russian Cyrillic though many Kazaks speak Russian as their first language and around 40 per cent are unable to speak Kazak.

The country is looking both East and West for assistance and markets, but ultimate loyalties lie within its own boundaries. ■

Ruth Cherrington

AT A GLANCE

Leader: Nursultan Nazarbaev.

Economy: GNP per capita \$1,160 (Australia \$18,000).

Monetary unit: tenge, 100 tein = 1 tenge.

Main exports: oil, gas, coal and other minerals, wool and meat.

Main imports: industrial materials, machinery and industrial parts, technical know-how. Industry employs 32 per cent of the workforce, compared with 22 per cent in agriculture – the proportions have not changed greatly in recent years. Officially, economic growth has declined from an annual average increase of 1.1 per cent in the 1980s to 0.9 per cent between 1990 and 1994.

People: 17.2 million.

Health: Infant mortality 27 per 1,000 live births (Canada 6 per 1,000). Healthcare is good relative to other former Soviet republics, but there is concern about the long-term effects of Soviet nuclear tests in the region.

Culture: Kazak 40 per cent, Russian 37 per cent, German 6 per cent, Ukrainian 5 per cent. The remainder are mainly Uzbeks, Tatars and Uyghurs.



Language: Russian is the main language of inter-ethnic communication, followed by Kazak.

Religion: Islam, Russian Orthodox.

Sources: Encarta 97 World Atlas CD Rom; World Development Report 1997; information from local sources.

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Increasing gaps in income and wealth with reductions in state subsidies and public services and higher levels of unemployment.



LITERACY ★★★★★
Most people receive basic education with near 100-per-cent literacy rates for men and women.



SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Rich in natural resources. But this wealth is not reflected in the balance of payments where there is a significant excess of imports over exports.



FREEDOM ★★★
Universal voting rights for over-18s. The media is tightly controlled and outright criticism of the current regime is restricted.



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Women in theory had equal rights under communism but this is changing. Kazak women are still the least restricted in Central Asia. Prostitution is on the rise.



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★
For males 65 years, for females 74. Not far behind more developed countries (US 76 years).

POLITICS



NI ASSESSMENT ★★★
Fairly stable. A new constitution was approved in 1995. The civil wars of other former Soviet states in the region have been avoided. President Nazarbaev has strengthened his own position at the expense of pluralistic politics. Oil wealth in this 'New Middle East' threatens chaos if not firmly controlled for the benefit of the whole population.

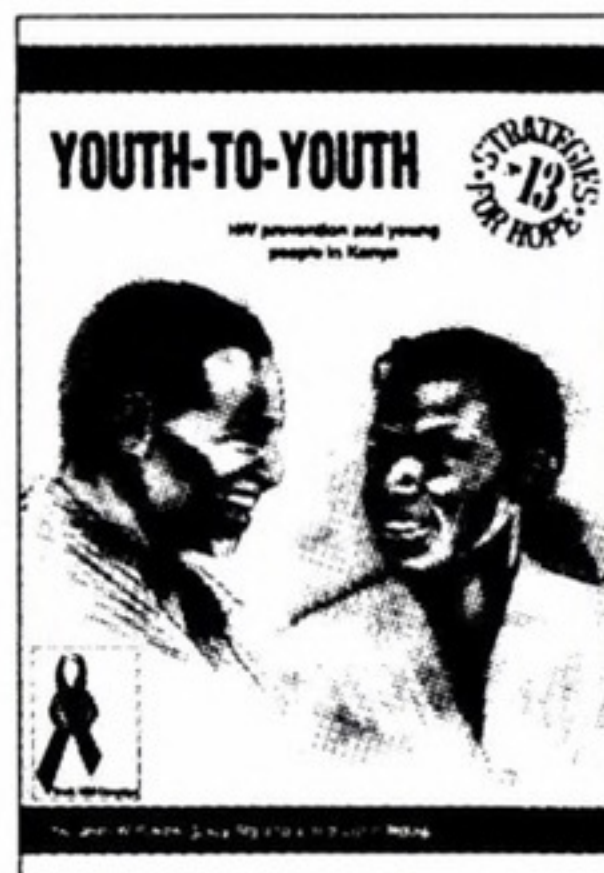
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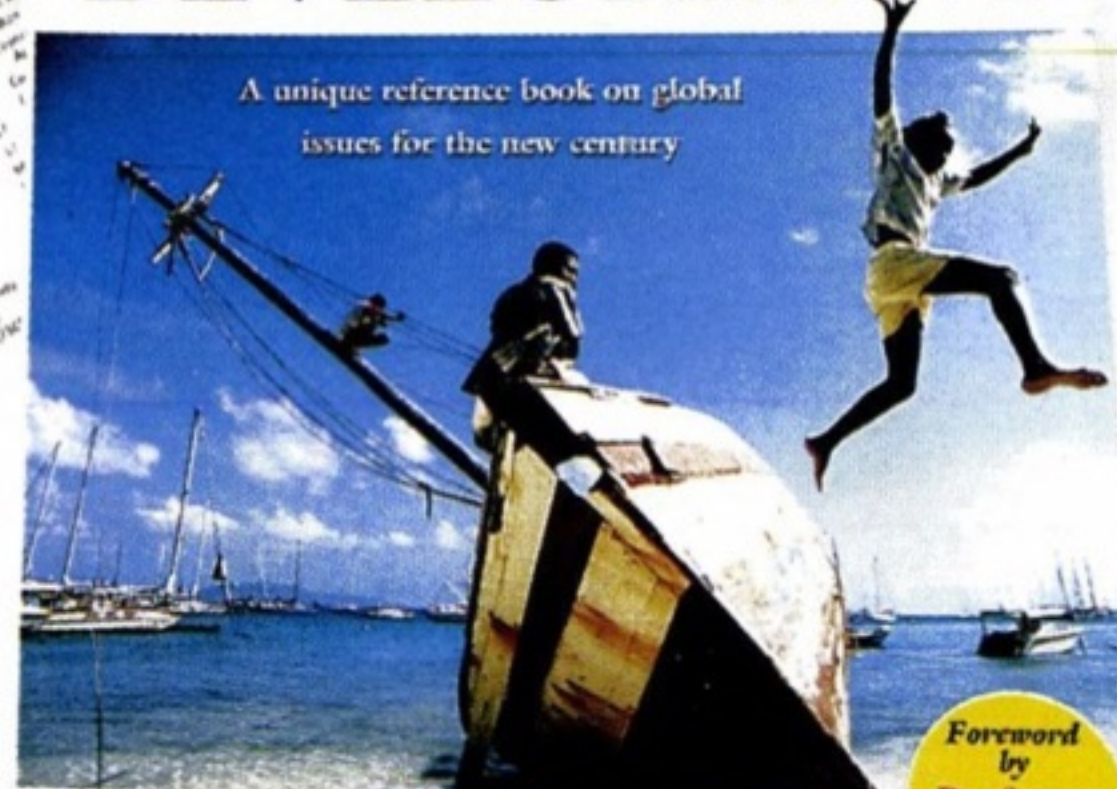
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